
Blogging for Business

By Graham Jones

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An Introduction to Blogging

Blogging is a method of sharing information over the Internet for work, pleasure or both. 'Blogs' are often described as an online diary, with dated posts displayed chronologically. 'Blogging' is the action of posting a message on a blog. A 'blogger' is the person posting the message. Many blogs also allow you to post pictures and receive comments from readers.

Blogs can be about anything. They are usually based on a particular topic or an individual's personal thoughts and opinions. They often contain links to other related sites and are commonly free to operate. They require little knowledge to set up and are simple to update.

Teenagers have blogs, celebrity clubs have blogs, news agencies have blogs, businesses have blogs - even your aunt Sophie could have a blog. The wonderful thing about blogs is that there are virtually no restraints on what they can be used for. This means that while it's an easy way to share news among family members and post the latest baby pictures, it's equally well suited for a business to post updates and data to inform the public, employees or other interested parties.

If you want to develop a rapport with your customers, make regular postings about your business and gain interest from other media outlets or potential customers you would certainly benefit from using a blog.

Because blogs by nature are considered a source of information rather than a commercial advertisement it makes perfect sense for a business to use blogs as a means of establishing a reputation in their market.

Posting information about their industry or field will create a sense of community involvement that potential customers will appreciate. Using links to your business page will create traffic from search engines and blog readers. You can even add a subscription form to your blog so that interested readers can immediately be emailed when you make a post.

You can create a blog for free. There are many free blog hosting sites you can locate by searching for 'blog' in the search engine. Blogger.com is a popular one.

Blogs are the simplest form of creating an online presence. You do not need any experience in website design as most blog hosts will provide you with pre-made templates. They also provide easy to understand instructions for creating your posts along with options such as allowing comments from readers or uploading photos.

The Main Reason for Blogging

How many times have you heard that you can become a millionaire via blogging? There are plenty of reports and ebooks you can download from the Internet which suggest that blogging is a money maker's dream. However, that's far from the truth.

Few people are making money just from the blogs they write. True you can get some extra income from advertising, such as Google AdSense, or you can sell affiliate products. But you won't make millions as a result.

However, you can make money from your blog if you take a different approach. Instead of trying to "monetize" the blog, the best approach is to treat a blog as a way of building and enhancing your reputation as an expert in your particular subject.

Regular blogging builds your online "footprint"; there is more and more material from you, about you and linking to you, all of which suggests that you must know something about what you are writing about. As people search and surf the Internet they keep seeing your name and references to your blog, which helps create the impression that you are "the" expert on the subject.

Being "the" expert is essential for generating more business. People like experts, they buy from experts and they frequently do not worry about the price being charged by experts. So, if you use blogging to establish your reputation as an expert you will benefit in two main ways. Firstly, you won't need to cold call for business—people will come to you instead. Secondly, your price no longer becomes an issue.

The main reason for blogging, therefore, is to enhance and build reputation so that you or your company is seen as the expert, the place to go, for your particular products and services. Blogging can make you serious money, but not directly from the blog itself. Instead, the blog can help you earn substantial amounts as a result of your enhanced reputation and status as "the" expert.

The True Cost of Blogging

Every day millions of people start blogging. Indeed, the best estimates show that a new blog is created every single second of every day. As if this weren't enough extra material being added to the Internet, there are of course millions of blogs already in existence. There is a vast amount of new information being added to the Internet every minute of every day.

Many people have been told that blogging helps increase your visibility on the Internet. That's true enough, but if you are in business at what cost?

Let's assume your time costs \$100 an hour and that you spend a total of two hours a week adding to your blog. That's \$200 a week or \$10,400 a year. That's the cost of blogging to your business. You really should calculate the amount of time and its value to your business.

Once you've found out how much blogging is costing your business, you need to consider how much money it is actually making. How many people bought items or services from you as a direct result of your blog? If you don't know, you need to add tracking codes to your blog links to ensure you can work this out.

Also, add up all the advertising income or affiliate income you've generated via your blog. Then look at the total. If it is less than the cost, you're wasting time and losing money by blogging. Don't let the fashion for blogging overcome traditional business requirements of profitability. For many people blogging is actually draining their profits, but they are unaware of this because they are not measuring their blog.

Ensure you measure your blog using tracking codes so you can check the real value of your blogging efforts. To do otherwise could seriously affect the profitability of your business.

True enough, blogs can raise your visibility on the Internet and can help boost search engine rankings. But being top of the search results for a particular keyword is of no value to you in business unless being top of the page actually translates into sales. Far too many people chase search engine ranking at the expense of chasing customers.

If you are using a blog to gain search engine ranking, but have not measured the income generated as a result, you could be wasting your time by writing your blog. As ever in business, measurement is essential if you are to do your best. So don't blog hopefully; measure its real impact.

Getting Traffic to Your Blog

There are many factors that make blogs much better than normal web pages including the speed at which blogs are indexed. And the speed of indexing means you can get more traffic to your site more quickly. Here are 12 popular techniques you can use:

1. Create at least one post per day. If your blog is updated regularly it will attract readers.
2. Get your own My Yahoo! page and submit your own RSS to My Yahoo—it is then indexed by Yahoo.
3. Submit to Google's Reader. When you submit your own blog RSS to Google's Reader the Google Blog Search will index your site.
4. Add a relevant link directory to your blog and include relevant links.
5. Use ping sites like ping-o-matic. Ping your site every time you add a new post.
6. Submit your blog to traditional search engines such as AltaVista, and MSN.
7. Submit your blog to traditional directories such as DMOZ.
8. Submit to as many RSS Directories and Search Engines as possible. This is a simple but repetitive process that can be done with software such as RSS Submit.
9. Comment on other blogs. Do not just leave short, lazy comments like "I agree." Leave well thought out replies that will force readers to wonder "who wrote this?"
10. Go offline. Use newspaper ads, public bulletin boards, business cards, even stickers to let as many people as possible know your blog exists.
11. Add a link to your blog in your e-mail signature.
12. Find a relevant group on Google groups, Yahoo groups, MSN groups or any of the thousands of forums and find like minded people and talk with them. Make sure you use your blog URL like it is your name.

Blogging Success Steps

To ensure that your blogging succeeds there are some straightforward steps to success you can follow.

- Step 1:** Decide on a topic area for your blog: the narrower the focus, the better.
- Step 2:** Sign up for an account at Blogger.com.
- Step 3:** Create an editorial plan—decide on a different theme for each day and then assemble topic ideas together.
- Step 4:** Contribute around 150 words every day to your blog, using your editorial plan as your guide.
- Step 5:** Submit your blog to all the search engines and blog directories.
- Step 6:** Promote your blog in forums, groups and social networks by commenting in other blogs.
- Step 7:** Promote your blog heavily offline using traditional marketing methods.

Support for your online marketing

You can get support for your online marketing from the author of this report, Graham Jones. With prices from only £20 per month you owe it to yourself to find out more from:

www.netmarketingsupport.com

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By Graham Jones
Internet Psychologist

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This report provides you with several ideas on how you can incorporate blogging into your business and build your company's reputation as a result.

About the author



Graham Jones is an Internet Psychologist who has studied the way people behave in the online world. He has used this knowledge to help businesses grow online and connect with their audiences. He is also an Internet Entrepreneur in his own right, having several successful online products and services. Graham works as a professional speaker and consultant. He runs workshops on Internet marketing, blogging and running an online business.