



# THAT BLOGGING BOTHER: INSIGHTS INTO THE WHY, WHAT, HOW AND WOW! OF BLOGGING

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## Why Blog?

**W**e live in a world where communication is instant and differentiating ourselves from competing purveyors of information is becoming increasingly difficult. Many businesses are questioning the value of blogging – as they should – and need confirmation that time and money spent on the project will represent a wise investment. A company blog might not be for everybody but I've put my writer's two cents down on paper to help give readers a sense of what blogging can do and trigger some ideas of how you might be able benefit from the concept. Here are a handful of reasons why blogging is beneficial:

1. It confirms expertise
2. It allows you to showcase your skills, talents and knowledge, strengthening your credibility with your audience
3. It helps develop rapport with your existing client base
4. It helps potential clients get to know you
5. It helps protect market share – if your competition isn't blogging, you own the field; if they are blogging, you can blog better
6. It gives you a mechanism for educating your clients and prospects
7. Like all social media, it's a chance to create a persona that is larger than you otherwise could
8. It is absolutely free – aside from the cost of your time
9. It's a chance to voice concerns over issues that concern you
10. It increases your company's search engine results, ESPECIALLY if you optimize for your key words.

11. It helps funnel people to your website so they can deepen their interest in doing business with you
12. It's fun! (If you like writing!)

I have one main blog sited on my website that gives me a platform for communicating with people who might want to do business with me someday. If you're interested in reading the types of articles a writer produces to stay in touch with a business audience, please feel free to check it out:

[www.crossmancommunications.com](http://www.crossmancommunications.com)

While I don't always choose topics of high appeal for my primary target audience, I do tend to stick to issues that relate to writing, which is something I know well.

Social Media Examiner is a great site for Social Media issues. The information it contains is straightforward and easy to access. Here's a link for their tips on building a great blog:

<http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/7-essential-design-elements-for-great-business-blogs/>

It sometimes helps to see what others are doing so you can model their behavior to create success. Here are the top 10 blogs of 2009 – with a bit of explanation about why they're considered to be so great:

<http://weblogs.about.com/od/popularblogsbloggers/tp/Top10Blogs2009.htm>

## *The Social Media Context:*

**I**f you are not currently blogging but are interested in giving it a whirl, bear in mind that the social media context in which you will be blogging is constantly evolving. In fact, I don't think it's going too far to say that social media is turning the world of marketing on its ear. I believe that we're partway through a revolution that will completely change how we do business within the next 5-10 years. The changes have only just begun – there are many more to come!

The implications for businesses today -- and especially for those run by people aged 40 and up -- are that we are not always perfectly conversant with new media technologies. As more tech-savvy young people flood into the workforce – and filter into more senior positions -- we are going to become increasingly redundant. The most competitive businesses going forward will be the ones who master the new media.

**Here are some helpful tips about the world in which your blog will be operating:**

- 🔒 Social media is friendly, conversational, immediate and unpredictable.
- 🔒 There are many different interconnected ways to stake your business presence in social media and you are creating an “identity network” that lets you engage different people differently.

- 🔒 Your blog is your premier marketing piece: it keeps you in front of your target audience and gives them an ongoing opportunity to understand how you or your organization can add value to their lives – if you provide consistent value.
- 🔒 There are different approaches to social media and you will hear conflicting information. I don't believe there is right way and a wrong way to do all this. The "right" way is what works for YOU.
- 🔒 Because social media is evolving you need to play a little – trial and error is OK! You go with what works until it doesn't anymore.
- 🔒 There are different approaches to blogging as well. Some experts say you have to blog at least four times a week. While that will undoubtedly generate search engine attention, very few people have the time or resources to do that. If you've got the staff to make it happen, and the analytics support the effort, great. Otherwise, just be consistent. The goal in the beginning is to blog often enough to establish a track record of doing it.
- 🔒 Social Media can be overwhelming so take baby steps. You don't have to do all of this at once and the more comfortable you become with one SM tool the more you will learn about how to make it pay.

## *First Steps: Initially You Need to:*

- ☞ Determine your audience. You are not blogging for everybody; you are blogging for people who might be interested in hearing what you have to say. Don't dilute your message!
- ☞ Make a list of your target audience's biggest concerns – start with the top six. These will become the “golden ideas” you will use to frame your first three months of blogging.
- ☞ Beside each item of concern, list a few points describing how you solve client problems or ease their pain. This will help you stay focused on your topic and your marketing messages and keep you clear on why your prospects need you. Don't be afraid to give information away – not all of it, obviously – people are looking for value and the prevailing wisdom is that you need to provide it.
- ☞ This is a marathon, not a sprint – relax and enjoy the process! Post your blog often enough that you keep your company name in front of your client base but not so often that you are a pest. Stay steady – once you start, don't stop.
- ☞ Start with two blog posts a month. Set up an editorial schedule with deadlines attached for drafting your blogs and posting them; use the topic areas you developed above.

- ☞ This does not have to be a professional piece of journalism – your blog is a professional note from you to your client base and it’s designed to help people get to know you and your skill set better. The more starchy you sound the less impressed people will be. But that being said, stay professional, stay focused and be the real you – speak in your own voice and you will be authentic.
- ☞ Internal corporate blogs are somewhat different from business blogs focused on an external consumer audience but generally speaking your blogs will get more attention if they’re posted midweek. You can test response over time and see what works best for you.

## *So How do I Do This?*

**D**ifferent organizations have different IT capabilities but if your blog is internally focused, then you’ll need your IT department to set your blog platform up on your internal system. If your audience is external to your organization you can either have your technical people set the blog up on your website or, if that isn’t a great option, give it a trial run on one of the free blogging platforms available today like Wordpress.

There is a little folderol involved in organizing the project but setting a blog up is easy and reasonably quickly.

Once you have your platform set up, you will want to:

- ✔ Draft an introductory post welcoming visitors to your new BlogSpot. Tell them you're looking forward to staying in touch and that you hope they'll find your blog interesting and valuable.
- ✔ Publish your post.
- ✔ Promote your post – inform the people on your mailing list that you now have a blog and invite them to visit. Invite them to contact you with any topics they'd like to see you address.
- ✔ Link your blog to your Linked In profile.
- ✔ Put your blog address in your email signature.
- ✔ Tweet your blog postings.
- ✔ Advertise your blog postings on FB.
- ✔ Review your analytics regularly. Knowing which blog posts get the most attention will help you tailor future posts so you can capture more attention.

## *What Can You Expect?*

**T**he short answer: almost anything!

Response rates for small business are varied and there are no firm statistics – what you want to look at are percentages: what percent of the people who receive your blog notice actually visit your blog? If you put an offer in your blog, what percent of those people are taking you up on it? How qualified is your bloglist? Are you funneling traffic to where you want it go? Are people commenting on your blog?

This can be as much a branding tool as anything and it's sometimes a "slow converter." As we know, many people use the web to shop slowly – they visit various sites, research what's out there, think about what they're after, compare, consider and, finally, take action by picking up the phone or sending an email.

It may take some time for people to discover your blog and begin thinking of it as a destination – but the more valuable information you provide in your blog the more interested people will be in returning to your blog. The old wisdom about advertising still holds: it can take 13-15 impressions before people are ready to make a purchase; consistency counts.

Don't be discouraged if your following builds slowly – it's not necessarily about making a sale, it's about positioning your business as a reliable source of wisdom.



## *Writing Template for Blog Posts:*

A writing template is also helpful – here’s a simple one that I often use to help keep me focused:

<b>Topic:</b>	<b>Details:</b>
<b>Why is this Important to your Audience? Why do they need to know this information?</b>	
<b>What do they need to know?</b>	
<b>How can your information help them or how does your idea work?</b>	
<b>What are the implications of your information for your audience?</b>	

The internet is an evolving network full of interesting twists and turns and it has successfully revolutionized the marketing of programs, services, products and ideas. A blog represents a wonderful tool for maximizing exposure and communicating with clarity and although it does require an investment of time and energy, it can reward the blogger with business and insights not otherwise available. I recognize that not everyone embraces the concept of writing and not everyone who might enjoy the project has the time to invest. If you need help launching your blogging project, please get in touch – this is something that I love to do!