



Blogging For Success

In my first article on new media I gave you a taste of these new methods of communication. Now I'd like to focus on each of them in a little more depth. We're going to start with blogging. You should at least consider a blog as a way to jump start your business or organization. You really need to consider it if you don't have a website yet.

One of the first things I want you to understand is that a blog is just a format and software option for a website. Depending on what your online goal is, I dare say that you don't need to look further than a blog. It's a very simple and inexpensive website option that's structured so you can manage it personally without having to depend on someone else. Do you have a website? Have you ever been frustrated because you can't easily update it? If so, then blog!

You can create a blog in its most simple form within minutes for the cost of your time. Visit Blogger (www.blogger.com) and you'll be able to create your own blog at no cost. If you want something with a little more functionality and ability to customize it, I recommend and exclusively use WordPress (www.wordpress.org). There are others but I'll only mention these two since most blogging software has common features and functions.

Blogs come in various formats but are usually in column form (one to three columns). You'll usually see a top masthead for the title and your logo, a column for your posts and one or more sidebar columns in which you can place lists of links to everything from documents to websites. The post column is where you would write about your company or topic regularly. This is where you develop your "voice" on the website. It's where your customers or members will learn to visit to find out what you've got to say and that will develop your business.

You hear a lot today about having your website, "search engine optimized" (SEO). Well, blogs are highly optimized and you don't have to do anything but post regularly. Soon after starting you'll find your company showing up in online searches (Google, Yahoo, etc.). This type of SEO costs you nothing.

Besides cost and SEO, another reason to blog is the fact that you're able to create an online conversation with your target audience. That's if you use the comment feature that's built into a blog. I recommend allowing people to make comments on what you write. Besides engaging your customers, you're making your website much more "sticky." This means keeping them on your website and making them want to come back often.

Because a blog is so easy to update you might want to create one and use it as an on-going, online, electronic newsletter. I like to think of blogs as personal publications. How many times have you wanted your customers to know something about you or what your company is doing and not had a convenient and immediate way to let them know? With a blog you can post your thoughts and ideas right away while it's fresh on your mind and your customers will be able to read it long before they would any other way.

I'm going to mention RSS here because it's one of the last things I want you to take away from this article. You blog will offer your visitors an RSS Feed. That is how they will subscribe to your blog. We'll go into this more in depth in a future article. But for now, just keep in mind that your customers or members, using software on their computer, can subscribe to your blog and receive what you write automatically, even if they never come back to your website! RSS is the mechanism that delivers your content to subscribing computers automatically and without using email. So there's no worry about spreading viruses. That's a comforting thought.

If you want to learn more about blogging as a tool for your business I would suggest you try the just-released "[The Corporate Blogging Book](#)" by Debbie Weil.

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