



This is the first in a series of articles about “new media.” This first article is an introduction and will be followed by articles on specific aspects of new media like blogging, podcasting and RSS.

What's all this about “new media”?

People in the marketing and communications business are pretty familiar with traditional media, mainly in the form of print publications, radio and television. But the advent of the internet has brought with it new tools to communicate information and market products. I'm going to start out describing a few terms in this first article and focus on specific example and ideas in the future.

One of the primary new media tools is a ***blog***, short for web log. Basically, a blog is defined by Wikipedia as “*type of website where entries are made (such as in a journal or diary), displayed in a reverse chronological order.*” Blogs, blogging and bloggers have been around since about 1998, but the potential of this information tool is only just beginning to be realized. More and more companies and organizations are beginning to use the medium as an easy form of micropublishing to a targeted and interested audience who can receive the updated information almost instantaneously.

The beauty of blogging for marketing and public relations is the ability to communicate directly with a willing target audience. Consider it for such applications as direct interactive communications with customers, dealers, members or any other target market. Blogs can be very complementary to other electronic communication methods such as periodic emailed newsletters.

Another new media tool is ***podcasting***, which Wikipedia defines as “*the method of distributing multimedia files, such as audio programs or music videos, over the Internet . . . for playback on mobile devices and personal computers.*” The growth in sales of i-Pods and other personal digital audio players has been nothing short of phenomenal. These devices have given people the ability to listen to what they want, when they want and where they want. While music will always be the most popular audio for downloading onto i-Pods, more and more people are downloading programming off the internet to listen to at their leisure. Thousands of people a day download Rush Limbaugh's three hour daily program because it allows them to listen to it when it is convenient for them. The introduction of video i-Pods has created a market for video programming as well. Imagine your customers or members watching a recorded product demonstration or informational program on a topic that's important to them with you as the producer. .

The last new media tool I'll mention is **RSS**. Think of it as "really simple syndication." This is an electronic mechanism that allows people to subscribe to feeds that contain anything from textual information to audio, video and document files. RSS is what powers the distribution of blogs and podcasts. It can do the same for your company newsletter or a regular information update.

As a business operator or communications professional these new media tools allow you new ways to communicate with your customers or members for a relatively low investment. Blogs can provide you with an easily updated website that can reach out to potential customers in a personal way. For example, a company with a new product might have the researchers involved in the product development write about the process of bringing the product to market and the results of testing to prove how well it works. A member organization may have its leadership write about issues affecting members and what the organization is doing to address those issues.

To learn more about these new media options I recommend investing a little time online looking through the definitions and links you'll find in Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org). If you want to find a consultant to help you the first question you should ask them is to show you their blog!

I would also suggest some reading material including: "[Naked Conversations](#)" by Robert Scoble and Shel Israel, [The Corporate Blogging Book](#) by Debbie Weil or "[The Long Tail](#)" by Chris Anderson, both of which you can find on Amazon.com.

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