

Fact Sheet: Blogging

What Are Blogs, and How Do They Work?

Short for “web log,” these are websites that explore particular subjects via journals, commentary and, often, visitor feedback, all displayed in reverse chronological order. Blogs are typically written in an informal, conversational style by clearly identified authors. Posts often respond to current events, visitor comments or the writings of other bloggers, and are usually generous with sharing links to relevant material at other blogs or websites.

Blogging activity has soared in recent years as technology has matured; some bloggers have developed considerable audiences and credibility. Some well-known blogs have surpassed many traditional media outlets enjoying household name recognition.

According to 2009 statistics from media agency Universal McCann, 77 percent of people using the Internet read blogs. A 2009 HubSpot study that looked at small- to medium-sized businesses found that ones that blog had 55 percent more site visits and 97 percent more inbound links.

Corporate blogging is a high-ROI way for a company to engage consumers in a dialogue about its brands and/or services and often is a more effective way to build a customer base than a high-dollar ad campaign.

Communications Strengths:

- **Aggregation of niche content** – By subscribing to blog feeds in your industry, you can join conversations occurring in your area of expertise.
- **Search engine optimization** – Blogs are text-heavy, are constantly updated and create many links that are readily found by search engines. Popular blogging platforms (e.g., WordPress) have been designed with SEO in mind, and can be modified with plug-ins that improve SEO capabilities.
- **Instant communication** – Because blogging posts circulate quickly, your messages can stay in the forefront of your customer’s mind, prompting immediate feedback, and can prevent or manage public-relations crises.
- **Reliable sentiment** – Although blogs *tend* to report facts with less reliability than mainstream media, the *sentiment* they convey is generally considered more reliable as an indicator of opinion among your target audience. This not only provides you with useful feedback, but allows you to relate to your constituents in a more personal way.

- **Flexibility** – The informal nature of blogs frees authors from many conventional journalistic constraints, allowing (but not demanding) quicker, more transparent, less heavily edited posts that emphasize sentiment over composition.

Communications Weaknesses:

- **Labor-intensive** – Content must be analyzed and updated regularly, as shelf-life is brief. Listening Platforms, such as NSI's [ReputationConnect](#), facilitate this, but messaging strategy and goals must be measured continually against recent posts.
- **Unreliable journalism** – No fact-checking, peer review, training, ethics or other journalistic standards are required of bloggers, and the free-form, informal nature encourages bloggers to post first and think later.
- **Uncontrollable** – Negative posts are hard to anticipate and even harder to counter. Web 2.0 forces corporate communications to “share the microphone with anyone in the audience.”

Examples:

- *Zappos*, the online shoe store, represents a company that has adopted an unusually aggressive stance toward blogging and other social media, with resulting media attention that has burnished its brand image. *Zappos* bloggers write about a variety of topics; their blogs are available here: <http://blogs.zappos.com/blogs>
- *Sip and Savor*, the American Beverage Association blog, provides an example of more reserved blogging that combines discussion of industry and popular topic. It is available here: <http://www.ameribev.org/blog/>
- The *General Motors* blogs get hundreds of thousand of hits per day. You can see them at: <http://www.gmblogs.com>

Blogging Options:

Free sites are available; however, their primary income is from advertising so your blog pages may be cluttered with ads. You can set up a blog on your company website or, for a nominal fee, set up a separate site. Video and audio blogging has gained popularity as well.

Have Questions?

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