

Better Business Blogging



Introduction Document to “What is a Blog?”

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Originally created by Mark White, an emarketing expert and blogging specialist. All efforts have been made to make the information contained in this eCourse correct. Mark White and Rosetta Alba Services Ltd are not liable for any actions that may result from the information contained in this document.

Introduction to “What is a Blog?”

1. What is a Blog?

There are lots of different opinions and descriptions of what a blog is, so it would seem sensible to start with a brief overview.

The name comes from a contraction of “web log” and it started life as a personal online publishing system. The blog would be a place on the internet where the author (normally an individual) could publish their thoughts and opinions on whatever subject they liked. These would then appear in chronological order.

A good place to start for some background on blogs is Wikipedia (<http://en.wikipedia.org>). They describe a blog as:

“The term blog is a shortened form of weblog or web log. Authoring a blog, maintaining a blog or adding an article to an existing blog is called “blogging”. Individual articles on a blog are called “blog posts,” “posts” or “entries”. A person who posts these entries is called a “blogger”.

These are all true and yet only provide half the story. A blog is effectively a special type of website which has allowed people who previously had no real access to publishing on the web to write and express their own opinions. There are also now very important marketing tools for businesses (see below).

2. Special Characteristics of Blogs

So what are the special characteristics that blogs have which make them so great both for personal use and for business use. Well, the main ones are:

- **No technical knowledge required:** you don’t need technical expertise to write a blog. You add pages or articles through a “Windows” type of interface so there is no need to rely on a web designer to update it for you.
- **Readers can leave comments:** your readers can respond to your posts so that you can start see who’s interested in the same areas as you or as a business open a conversation with potential clients, suppliers or partners. The perfect opener to developing a relationship and a network!
- **Automatically organised:** ‘categories’ and ‘archives’ are integral parts of a blog and each post will automatically be placed correctly according to the selection you make. This gives great organisation and structure to a blog which is perfect for visitors and Search Engines alike and allow you to concentrate on the content

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- **Search Engine magnets:** with regular posts, categorised content and search engine friendly links and addresses, business blogs become ideal places for Search Engines to find the type of content they love ... and you can rank very highly!
- **Multiple Authors:** not only can one person add content but you can allow access to any number of people so that you have several authors contributing to a topic or a series of topics. It also opens up the possibilities for blogs as tools ideally suited to internal communications within a company.
- **Internal and External Links:** blogs thrive by links and referring to other articles so that conversations and ideas can be taken up and developed. At its best, this allows a viral effect in terms of promotion and helps develop both relationships and networks.
- **Permalinks:** every post and every category has its own individual address, forever! This means that you can refer to them in articles, emails, newsletters etc safe in the knowledge that they will always be found. Another great feature for the Search Engines.

3. What are Personal Blogs?

A personal blog is generally set up to allow the author to discuss their views on anything and everything, so the topics change with each post according to mood or inclination. This is where blogs started and it is essentially a personal diary or scrapbook, which can be great fun to both read and write.

There are now tools which are freely available to allow anyone to set up a personal blog quickly and simply - while these are not advised for a Business Blog simply because they offer less control over a tool which will become key to your business. The most well know is Blogger (www.blogger.com), owner by Google, though there are others which are as good if not as well known. Contact me if you would like a list of free personal blogging services available.

4. What are Business Blogs?

However, over the past 12 - 18 months, this technology has been adopted to a much larger extent by businesses as a new and very powerful marketing tool which has allowed them to communicate with their customers, enter into dialogue with them and helped to create relationships and networks online. As a result, many companies has successfully used them to help to dominate their niche and market themselves more effectively to customers and prospects alike.

To learn more about Business Blogs and how to use them, you may find our own ***Business Blogging eCourse*** to be useful. It's free but very good! 😊 You can have a

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look at it at www.betterbusinessblogging.com/free-business-blogging-course/

5. Why should a Business have a Blog?

Firstly, let's make it clear that a Business Blog is not a place where you keep and report a diary of your company's activities - a personal blog may sometimes be a diary, but a business blog most certainly is not.

You should think of a Business Blog much more as part of your online marketing toolkit, indeed a central element of it. It can be used in a number of different ways according to your business requirements but all centred around the ideas of communications with prospects and customers as well as general marketing and business development.

Specifically, a blog is particularly beneficial in:

- Differentiating your business, products and services
- Attracting prospects and developing new business opportunities
- Promoting your business through the Media and online Public Relations
- Acting as a central element of your Search Engine marketing
- Researching and Developing new Markets, Products or Niches
- Developing Communication channels to your market
- Helping to enhance and build your visibility and brand
- Positioning Yourself as the Expert
- Improving Internal Communications

In all of these areas, you will find that Business Blogs are both very effective and very cost effective.

Blogs help *to personalise your company and the products and services* that you offer, which increases the value of your organisation in the eyes of your customers. This in turn will build much *higher levels of trust* so that, in fact, the readers of your Blog often become your most passionate word-of-mouth ambassadors.

In addition, you find that Search Engines such as Google will actually work for you in your online marketing. Because of the way in which blogs are structured, they are *very search engine friendly*. The way that they are written and organised (automatically, I might add) is perfect for search engines - as a result, they tend to rank them more highly than other types of websites.

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On top of that, the inbuilt distribution facilities like RSS and the blog specific marketing opportunities that trackbacks, comments and social bookmarking all add extra ways and means to promote your blog and therefore your business.

A Business Blog is such a flexible and yet powerful marketing tool for small businesses and large corporate companies alike, that the key issue is often deciding just which area you want to focus on with your Blog. However, I find that once a business has the chance to have their questions answered about blogs and understand what they can offer, the question tends to change from “Why have a blog?” to “What sort of a blog will be best?”.

If you do want to ask those questions, then you can do so on *The Blog Coach* site at www.theblogcoach.co.uk/free-blog-appraisal/ - it's a *free Blog Appraisal* for those without a Business Blog to ask all the questions they want before embarking on setting one up. Or you can simply email Mark White at BlogAppraisal@theblogcoach.co.uk

6. Benefits of Blogging?

As you have been reading this overview, you have probably been thinking about some of the ways in which you could use a Blog for your own business - perhaps with a view to reaching new audiences, improve visibility on the web and their interactions with customers, as well as actually increase sales. It is now an important part of the online marketing for your business!

Don't forget that a Business Blog gives you, your company and those who work for it, a place to collect and share ideas and relevant information with your customers and prospects. This in turn generates mutual trust and builds to a relationship which is more like a partnership than the typical supplier-customer sales relationship.

The benefits that you can enjoy are:

- **Position yourself as an expert** - Demonstrate your knowledge, expertise and experience on matters relating to your industry
- **Differentiation** - Using a blog, you can start to differentiate your business and services from those of your competition
- **Search Engine Marketing** - Increased visibility on the main Search Engines such as Google, Yahoo and MSN.
- **Open Direct Communications** - You can create a direct and open dialogue with your customers, prospects, partners and suppliers

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- **Media & Public Relations** - Blogs are unique business marketing tools. The media calls you, not your competition
- **Brand Awareness** - An ideal channel through which to put your brand in front of the customer and communicate what it stands for
- **Educational Marketing** - Show how your products and services can solve your customers problems rather than rely on interruption marketing and “in your face” selling
- **Reputation Management** - Manage your online reputation as a business that is transparent and easy to work with
- **Internal Communications & Project Management** - with a Blog, you can share information easily within your company and hugely improve the internal communications

A Blog is also very easy to use because you can write using a “Word” type of interface which means that you do not need a web designer to put information on the web for you any more - anyone in your organisation with access to the internet can update and add information as required!

7. Are there any courses on Blogging in the UK?

To be honest not many. We do, however, run workshops and courses for both companies and individuals wishing to learn more about Blogging and, in particular, how to use it in their businesses to market their company and products, get closer to their customers, improve communications internally, plus the other benefits that we mentioned above.

(See: www.betterbusinessblogging.com/business-blogging-courses-workshops-training/)

However, you may find that the best way to start is to read the **Free eCourse on Business Blogging** that we provide and use the email support to ask any questions that you have during the course. We can go into more depth after that as required.