

The Fellows and members of the Society's Best Practices Committee share their thoughts and advice on the keys to success in the world of corporate blogging.

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Corporate Blogging Best Practices

From John Cass

Author, *Strategies and Tools for Corporate Blogging*

Commenting: Corporate blogging is not just about the content on your site, it's also about participating in conversations on other blogs. Respond to comments on your blog, and also comment on other blogs. These conversations can be just as important as building relationships with people on your own site and establishing your reputation in your community.

Tracking Conversations: Tracking conversations on other blogs is one of the most difficult aspects of blogging. Fortunately there are now technologies that enable you to track conversations. These include coComment, del.icio.us, Co.mments and Commentful.

Personalization: Personalization is important in writing a blog, as blogs provide employees the chance to break down some of the barriers that exist between customers and companies. The informal style of writing that is possible in a blog can help reach customers who would not pay attention to a company's statements otherwise.

From Josh Hallett

Social Media Consultant, Hyku

Read/Research: Before you start to blog, spend time reading other blogs. Research blogs in your area of interest to learn more about the content and culture (both of these are equally important).

Trial Blog Writing: If you plan to launch a blog soon, start writing now in the background (sort of a blog-in-training). This will get you in the habit of writing posts on a frequent basis and allow you to develop your voice/theme before you go live. If you can't keep up with posting now, how will things change once you launch your real blog?

Own Your Content's Future: Make sure you own the domain name and future development path of your blog. Too many organizations start with a free or low-cost service and don't own their domain name, i.e., corporateblog.typepad.com. Spend the little bit of time and money it takes to control your domain and content.

From Shel Israel

Co-author, *Naked Conversations*

Humanize: Remember that one fundamental reason for blogging is the humanization of the corporation. Be a real person when you blog. Show yourself doing a job that you have some passion for. Show your fallibility and, above all, do not fall into the trap of mediocrity, where so many corporate blogs wind up.

Serve your reader more than your employer:

This is a success strategy. The more generous you are to your readers, the more influential you will be. Send people away from your site through links to competitors when appropriate. You may lose the sale, but in the long run you will gain a loyal customer.

Join conversations before you start new ones:

People are already talking about the issues they care the most about. Read what they have to say and add value to the existing conversation. Then when you start a new conversation, you will already have credibility and trust. If you try to initiate a conversation and people don't know who you are or where you are coming from, then they will either ignore you or mistrust you.

From Mike Manuel

Social Media Strategist, Voce Communications

Corporate blogs require a TON of time and attention: Underestimating the amount of time, energy and commitment required to maintain a healthy blog is a common mistake companies make.

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Corporate Blogging Best Practices

(cont'd.)

From Mike Manuel (cont'd.)

Every blog should have at least one internal champion who sees to the regular care and feeding of the blog and ensures that a steady mix of insight, access and perspective is offered back to its readers. Increasingly, I believe corporate blogs, especially those for large companies, require a dedicated, full-time person

Corporate blogs should place equal

emphasis on posts AND comments: Too often, companies focus so much energy and effort on writing blog posts that they neglect the importance of actively watching and responding to blog comments. I think the difference between a good blog and a great blog has less to do with the value, tone and frequency of posts and a lot to do with how an organization demonstrates it is listening, reflecting and addressing related discussions. More often than not, I think this begins by simply paying attention to blog comments.

Corporate blogs extend offline: A great corporate blog is one that's capable of fostering and cultivating connections online that then manifest and grow offline. Sometimes it's simply the spreading of an idea offline via a community of readers that share a common point of view. Other times it's actually meeting with members of this community who have come to know and understand the people behind an organization through its blog and their contributions to it.

From Giovanni Rodriguez

Co-founder, Hubbub

Innovate: Too many businesses are adopting cookie-cutter, template approaches to social media. The best are digging deep and inventing new and compelling ways to engage with their customers, partners and employees.

Integrate: The convergence of all the digital tools that comprise social media are making some companies think about the long-term effects on information management. Integrate with the IT team to incorporate and support with other Web 2.0 tools. One trend to watch: integrated, social-media hubs that will replace or augment intranets and extranets.

Scale: Whether yours is a small or large organization, you need to understand that social media is a tool for everyone, not just the official spokespeople or the PR team. Smart companies who understand this (e.g., IBM) are turning their businesses into "communities of communicators."

From Debbie Weil

Author, *The Corporate Blogging Book*
Founder, Wordbiz.com

Use It or Lose It: If you've got a corporate blog, use it! Case in point, after a whopper winter storm Jet Blue had hundreds of angry customers camping out at JFK airport and trapped inside planes on the tarmac. Instead of posting a sincere "I'm sorry" to his corporate blog, CEO David Neeleman said nothing. He did speak to the press and was quoted widely, but his blog hadn't been updated in weeks. UPDATE: I FedExed a signed copy of *The Corporate Blogging Book* to Neeleman's office. Within 24 hours, his staff called to thank me and updated his blog with two new entries. Sub-title for this best practice: In a Crisis, Listen Online As Well As Offline.

Just Do It: Don't put blogging on your list of To-do's for 2008. C'mon guys. It takes hours -- not months -- to create a blog. Start internally to give yourself time to develop a credible, compelling blogging voice. Round up a multi-author team of bloggers. In other words, use a "Leap, Then Look" strategy to get started.

Don't Obsess Over Your ROB (Return on Blogging): Although you can use proxies to measure the ROI of a corporate blog in dollars, the reality is that a corporate blog is still a soft marketing strategy. It's many things: a direct, real-time conduit to customers, a conversation with customers, a brand enhancer (if you execute well), a way to improve search engine rankings, a way to get media attention, etc. These will ultimately translate to the bottom line even if there isn't an exact calculation.

