

Is Blogging Right for Your Business?  
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It seems you can't get through a single workday without hearing the word 'blog.' Everyone appears to have one, and yet it's not clear whether a blog would be the right answer for your organization. In fact, what is a blog, really?

The word 'blog' is short for 'weblog.' At its most basic form, it is simply a website. It can have its own web address or be rolled into your current website. The overwhelming majority of blogs are online diaries or journals of ordinary people. In fact, it is estimated that 99 percent of all blogs are read only by their author. That doesn't seem like a great tool for communication – until you look at the numbers.

A new blog is created every second of every day. Each year will see over 31 million new blogs. At present, there are over 80 million blogs. One percent of those, or 800,000 blogs, are read by a large number of people. That's a substantial amount of meaningful communications outlets.

Probably the most important thing to keep in mind when evaluating blogs is that they are not The New York Times. They are not for everyone. They are for someone. There are blogs that focus on every possible interest or organization imaginable – and loyal readers who follow them. That is the opportunity with blogging, a chance to directly communicate with your target audience. No wasted effort, no overspending on advertising.

One of the best examples in recent memory of how a blog can have a significant effect on business is the Kryptonite lock / Bic pen debacle. Kryptonite ran advertising that said it was impossible to break, and impossible to pick, its locks. The company sold thousands to consumers who trusted this claim. Then a blog appeared that showed step-by-step how to pick the lock using a Bic pen. Within hours, thousands of people had viewed the blog and circulated the information. Many locks were picked and property stolen. As a result, Kryptonite was forced to issue a massive recall of the locks, be subjected to a class action lawsuit, and remove its advertising claim, costing the company millions of dollars.

Simultaneously a blog's greatest opportunity and threat is speed. Blogs are instant and once they spread, they live forever. Think of it as exponential communication. This can be a tremendous advantage for companies capitalizing on blogging. It can also be a tremendous disaster to companies that choose to ignore their brand and reputation online.

Competing with speed as the greatest opportunity and threat is control. A company can have a blog and control its message. What it can't control are the reactions to that message and the other blogs that will support or refute it. Conversations are happening and opinions are being formed about your company or business whether you choose to engage or not. For most companies, it makes sense to join the conversation.

To survive in the 'blogosphere' requires commitment to the practice, and the ability to quickly adapt and respond. There are endless opportunities for a company to thrive and support business goals online with blogging. In the end, marketing through blogs is an evolution of communication. Your customers are moving online and so too must the businesses that market to them.