



"BLOG BUSTER"

All you needed to know about Blogs and thought you were not smart enough to ask

While mainly a content phenomenon, it has had a huge impact in the way people communicate and interact and has attracted marketers particularly when it comes to original or unique campaigns.

The debates over the numbers and the technical aspects are fairly straightforward, but they miss a deeper debate that's going on over the nature of blogs and the communities that form around them. It is this very nature that has propelled this tremendous buzz around blogs, with no signs of slowing down.

1. The term Blog/Vlog

The term Blog comes from the term Web-Log. It is an online diary or a personal chronological log of written thoughts published on a Web page. A Vlog or videoblog is a Blog which uses video as the primary content. A typical vlog entry combines an embedded video or video link with supporting text and images.

2. What is a Blog

A blog is a personal website of an individual. That individual has every freedom to post anything he wants on his blog; thoughts, articles, pictures even videos. Visitors to this blog-website can comment and interact around that blog, creating a small (and many times huge) online community of people sharing the same ideas, same thoughts, or simply talking to each other.

3. Key features of Blogs

- It's a kind of website that is easy and quick to create.
- It is organized by time (chronologically backwards).
- It is organized by posts (or postings).
- The posts are usually short and frequently posted.
- Readers can often respond or react through a 'comments' feature.
- It is organized with dated entries (each entry is time-stamped).
- It lets you publish instantly to the web - you don't have to learn HTML or use a web authoring program.
- It is usually maintained by one person, but there are multi-person blogs.
- It can be free or very low-cost to create.
- The use of links is a common distinguishing characteristic.
- The author's voice and personality often comes through.



4. Types of Blogs

We could easily say that Blogs are separated in five types, although most successful blogs are a combination of 2 or more of these types described below.

- a. Personal diary. Where the writer records the moments of his daily life in great detail.
- b. News related. Where the owner comments and receives feedback on specific news, or world issues of interest to him.
- c. Emotional. Here the writer uses the blog as a tool for psychological purification and soul cleansing.
- d. Book. A variety of bloggers are actual writers. Blogging enables them to receive accurate and immediate feedback by submitting parts, or whole of a book they intend to publish or improve.
- e. IT industry. A large number of blogs is created and maintained by the people of the IT industry, solely for technical, or IT matters.

Creating and maintaining your Blog is generally free, although we have "Blog tools" that can incur some extra cost in order for the user to have more utilities and features for his blog.

5. Blogs and business

The abilities of a blog expand from taking personal notes and projecting them on the internet, to hosting online discussions via Forums. A poet can publish his poems on a blog, a fan can start a fan site with his blog, personal galleries of a person can be created with photos and videos, someone can also advertise or even forward products on blogs, that is where blog-business and politics come in.

Another very important and also rising aspect of blogs is that, people from all around the world can criticize and evaluate products or services of a company. Influenced by large companies such as Microsoft Corp. <http://www.microsoft.com> and Sun Microsystems Inc. <http://www.sun.com> and other technological companies, who have used blogs for some time, an increasing amount of firms are using blogs as a means of communication.

Without being connected to the media, the online journal format helps corporations expand their spectrum, generate business and encourage consumer loyalty through word-of-mouth.

Michael Wiley, General Motor's director of new media said: "When we feel that we need to get a direct response out there, we've certainly got this bully pulpit to some extent. It's a place where we can talk directly to people unfiltered."

Intelliseek Inc. <http://www.intelliseek.com> analyses and tracks blogs. Its chief marketing officer Pete Blackshaw says that that it is inevitable that companies use the consumer-driven web environment to their benefit in the future.

"At the end of the day, the job of any good leader at any corporation is to communicate," said Sun Microsystems president Jonathan Schwartz, whose company gets 300,000 visits a month. "The hallmark of companies that will find blogs useful is the company that cares about its perception ... and the integrity of its relationship with its customers," he said.



6. Profiting from your Blog

So if it's like a website, we can serve banners ? can we profit ?
Yes indeed.

It wasn't long ago that bloggers and money had nothing to do with each other. But as the blogosphere exploded into the public consciousness over the past year it was inevitable that the captains of commerce would latch onto this increasingly popular form of personal media.

It has now become common to see advertising on personal blogs. Major corporations such as Microsoft, Nokia and Dr.Pepper have launched blogs. Executives like Sun Microsystems President Jonathan Schwartz and Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban now blog (see related OJR story). Ad-supported blogs such as PaidContent, Weblogs Inc. and Corante have formulated standards for separating commerce from editorial content.

This is mainly done by advertising methods (links, etc) on blogs. For example, a Blogger can put a link of Google or Amazon on his blog that redirects the user to the link the he or she clicks on. Google and Amazon in this case gain money from users that visit their websites, so the owner of the blog who projected links of Google and Amazon on his blog receives an amount of money for every click a user applies to the links. A blog with a large amount of visitors, receives a decent amount of clicks which means a decent amount of money that the blog owner gains.

There is also a more indirect way of gaining money by creating blogs, where large companies pay people to create blogs that forward and promote the company's products. The main theoretical characteristic of such a blog is that it provides honest information even if that is bad for the company. However, in reality, politics and propagandas emerge when it comes to business and most of the blogs that fall in that category always don't support reliable information.

These days cyberspace and the blogosphere add new wrinkles to the debate. Just how far can marketers go in soliciting blog coverage of their products or services ? Does the practice of paying bloggers to blog about a product amount to an advertorial, embedded infomercial or product placement – and does such an arrangement violate the compact of trust between reader and writer? Or is it simply the next logical step in the blogosphere's evolution from hobby to business opportunity? Do different rules apply to journalists who blog?

7. Blogs and marketers

This year has been earmarked as the tipping point for the new age of online media, with blogs, podcasts and video podcasts beginning to challenge the dinosaurs of broadcasting. The supposed mass migration of people to the web will relieve traditional media firms of their viewers and listeners, putting pressure on the old-school rules of advertising.

Many marketers suspect there are probably some valuable insights contained in the Web logs produced by the estimated 20 million online diarists. Marketers say bloggers' unsolicited opinions and offhand comments are a source of invaluable insights that are hard to get elsewhere.



There are hundreds of thousands or millions of people that you as an advertiser don't really care about reaching. If you're in the mood to create a buzz about a product, you don't care about their impressions. Recent surveys suggest approximately a quarter of the overall audience for blogs maintain blogs themselves, lending credence to the theory that blogs are a place to create buzz and reach influencers.

Now, a growing number of marketers are using new technology to analyze blogs and other "consumer-generated media" -- a category that includes chat groups, message boards and electronic forums -- to hear what is being said online about new products, old ad campaigns and aging brands. Purveyors of the new methodology and their clients say blog-watching can be cheaper, faster and less biased than such staples of consumer research as focus groups and surveys.

8. The future

With rather moderate techniques, it is estimated that today there are approximately 20,000,000 active blogs globally, with that number doubling almost every five months. In the distant future one out of four internet users is expected to have and maintain his/her own blog. In countries with high internet penetration, like the US, 30% of the users read or visit blogs already, in addition to their other surfing needs.

Advertisers are already targeting this market. At the top of the scale, Rocketboom - a three-minute daily video blog from the US that's downloaded 300,000 times per day - used eBay to sell a week's worth of advertising for \$40,000. Such figures prove that small independent video productions can generate serious revenue over the web.

At the bottom end, how long before Google works out a podcasting or video podcasting alternative to AdWords, the highly successful system that allows small website owners to outsource advertising slots in return for a few cents from 'pay-per-click' advertisers?

As you'd expect, the world's biggest software developers are ready to capitalize on the changing media landscape. Microsoft, for example, has been heavily promoting its AdCenter technology, and among its newest innovations are video-hyperlinking ads. This detects products displayed on TV, allowing viewers to zoom in on products then click through to more detailed descriptions and a 'checkout' to buy the product.

It's these sorts of less intrusive tactics that will win the day for advertisers. Deriving from technology developed for the web, and making its way onto our TV screens by way of intelligent set-top boxes and media centre PCs, 21st-century advertising will provide a more seamless experience for users. There'll be clever ways to encourage users to buy on impulse and the whole process will provide advertisers with precise data on where and when their adverts inspired a purchase.



Read more on a blog dedicated to this subject :

<http://www.toprankblog.com/>

<http://www.technorati.com/blogs/Marketing>

<http://www.the-cma.org/events/blogs.cfm>

9. Create your own !

So who are these people who would be willing to post about their lives in as public a forum as the Internet ? They are people just like you. Every day millions of people, some of whom have no technical ability whatsoever, write on their blogs. To meet this demand some amazing tools have been created that will allow anyone, even people with very little knowledge of computers, to have their own blog. If you can find your way onto the Internet and follow some basic instructions you can have your own blog. It's just that easy.

No actual knowledge of programming is needed for someone to create his own blog. All a person needs to learn so he can host his own blog for FREE, is some basic commands and use any of the variety of sources available. Just like a website, after the creation, it has to be hosted somewhere. A blogger can create and host his own web log within a few minutes. There are some blogs that a user can access through web space such as Google, Tripod, Lycos and MSN.

After all was said and done we suggest one of these sites, to create or experiment on your own:

<http://www.livejournal.com/>

LiveJournal is a simple-to-use communication tool. You can use it in many different ways: as a private journal, a blog, a social network and much more.

<http://www.blogger.com/start>

Probably the fastest growing one, owned by Google.

<http://spaces.msn.com/>

The rival from Microsoft's MSN network.

<http://www.myspace.com>

The online community portal that attracted much attention since its \$580 million buyout from Robert Murdoch.



10. Best Blogs & Podcasts of 2006

Let's start with the ones in the Greek blogosphere :

1. <http://frank-anton.blogspot.com/> on IT and other matters
2. <http://nikos.wordpress.com/> by N.Dimou
3. <http://www.pestola.gr/> advertising itself as the best Greek blog
4. <http://www.buzz.gr/> from Anemone
5. <http://www.panos.gr/> by P.Samprakos

and globally :

1. <http://www.blogsbestof.com/> → A collection of the best blogs of 2006
2. <http://www.marketingsherpa.com/sample.cfm?ident=28525> → An inevitable marketing tool and website you should often visit regarding blogs
3. <http://www.acrossthesound.net/> → Entitled as the best Podcast on the topic of marketing, the owner of the blog Joseph Jaffe discusses on his podcast the world of new marketing.
4. <http://blog.startwithalead.com/weblog/> → Entitled as the Best Blog on email marketing, Chris Baggot the owner of the blog discusses the importance of emails in marketing, he refers to it as the greatest marketing tool in History.
5. <http://blog.startwithalead.com/weblog/> → Entitled as the best B 2 B Marketing Blog with the 65% of the B 2 B Marketers reading this blog. This blog is focused on B 2 b Sales, leads and marketing for the complex sale. The Owner of the blog Brian Carroll won honourable mention for his blog.
6. <http://www.seroundtable.com/> → Entitled as Best Blog on Search Marketing, this blog owned by a team of bloggers focuses on the marketing business of search engines on the internet.
7. <http://www.adrants.com/> → Entitled as the Best Blog on Advertising, the owner of this blog Steve Hall provides marketing and advertising news with attitude in the form of a website and daily email newsletter.
8. <http://andywibbels.com/> → Entitled as the Best Blog on Marketing to a specific consumer Demographic, Andy Wibbels helps small businesses use blogs to increase profit and save time.
9. <http://www.revenews.com/> → Entitled as the Best Blog on Affiliate Marketing, this blog is hosted by a team of authors which discuss and write articles about Affiliate Marketing News.
10. <http://podboy.typepad.com/techvoice/> → Entitled as the Best Blog on the topic of PR, a blog hosted by Mathew Podboy which focuses on the Technology of PR. The owner Mather Podboy is a consultant and co-founder of Voce Communications.
11. <http://www.ducttapemarketing.com/weblog.php> --> Entitled as the Best Blog on Small Business marketing, owned by John Jantsch.
12. <http://www.marketing-blog.biz/blog/> → Entitled as the best Foreign Language blog owned by a team of bloggers. The blog is in German so I can't understand its main Topic of interest.
13. <http://sethgodin.typepad.com/> → Entitled as the Best Blog on General Marketing Topics owned by Seth Godin who Is a best selling author. His books changed the way people thought about marketing, his ideas generally on Marketing can be found on this blog.
14. <http://commercial-archive.com/> → Described as a commercial-laden delirium of heaven and hell for advertising addicts 'round the world.



15. <http://persuasion.typepad.com/> → This blog focuses on the art of persuasion, the title is "A Day in the life of a persuasion Architect".
16. <http://webmarketcentral.blogspot.com/> → Entitled as the Webmarketingcentra the blog's goal is to help online marketing and e-commerce professionals to do their jobs more effectively and efficiently.
17. <http://www.ypulse.com/> → Published by Anastasia Goodstein, Ypulse provides daily news & commentary about Generation Y for media and marketing professionals. Anastasia Goodstein (journalist) has worked with several leading consumer online & television brands including Current TV, AOL, Oxygen TV and Teen People.