

Introduction

INFORMATION ONLY

By now you probably already know something about web logs, or blogs, and may even have one already. They are an affordable way for anyone with few technical skills to create a personal website to communicate with readers.

A blog is also a valuable way to communicate with potential clients and to create credibility, trust and relationships with readers who are interested in your services as a professional. No matter what business you are in, letting people know about your expertise, what you can do for them, and who you are is essential for attracting new clients. There is no better medium for doing this than a blog.

We will give you some links to some good blogs should you wish to gain an in-depth understanding of the history of blogs, their technical workings, and their use in politics, journalism and personal diaries (Appendix C). Other than that, we won't go into non-business blogs in this book. This is about creating a professional business blog.

Let's narrow the scope of this publication.

This ebook is for you if you are an independent professional wanting to get clients for your business through an online Internet marketing tool called a blog. It is a manual to give you what you need to set up and run your blog effectively.

Independent professionals are those individuals who work for themselves and provide services to individuals or organizations. Most typically we both help people working as coaches, organizational developers and trainers, all sorts of consultants, and other people running small businesses. It doesn't matter what kinds of services you provide; if you want to attract clients through any sort of communication medium, then a blog is an excellent way to do this.

It boils down to this: if you are in the business of helping people or organizations through the services you provide, you need to communicate who you are and what you can do for your potential clients. You've got to find a way to let people know you. Your readers and potential clients aren't going to buy services from you unless they know and trust you.

Getting to know you...

You can't get to know people from a one-time networking event. You can't cold-call people and create credibility and a warm trusting relationship, no matter how silver-tongued you may be. You can't buy ads in your newspaper or radio and create the kind of customer relationship necessary for gaining clients. You can't send them direct mail pieces and expect them to call you up and hire you.

How do you communicate with potential clients? The Internet and email marketing has opened the doors to new ways of communicating. (Forget print newsletters. They are expensive and get tossed out too easily.)

Everyone's email inboxes are crowded with spam and junk. You may have an email newsletter or ezine and already know that it is becoming harder to grow your subscriber list. An ezine is important but it's not enough.

An ezine is a great way to send your readers articles you've written on topics of interest to them. Never underestimate the power of the written word. Even though people may not respond right away, over time you will hear from readers who appreciate your knowledge and the fact that you take the time to keep them posted on concepts crucial for them and their needs.

Publishing an ezine is now considered a must for marketing, something that every professional should do on a regular basis. But for those people who want to make a significant impact on their readers and potential clients, they will want to add a blog to their marketing tool kit. Why? Shouldn't an ezine tell readers all they need to know about you, your expertise, and the programs, products and services you have available to them?

Welcome to the World Wide Fishing Pond

Think fishing pond. Out here in California, we see men with their fishing poles extending into the ocean. Many of them have more than one pole, more than one fishing line. And the ones that do catch more fish.

You have a website. It is probably a static online brochure that was designed at one time, and apart from some updates, it doesn't change much. It is probably professional in the sense that

it is serious, presenting your 'best face forward.' It lists all the services you provide, your credentials, the list of clients you've worked with, and a few articles to establish credibility.

But it may not change that much over the year. You change, your clients change, and the business environment changes, at a rapid speed. You need a medium to communicate that is not static, that can deliver your latest thoughts and information to your client base. If you are not communicating often with your client base, then you are missing opportunities to create client relationships.

Maybe you thought your ezine would do this, but once a month may not be enough. And to intrude into people's inboxes too frequently is not a good idea.

What? More Work to Do?

The best way to ensure current communications is to have an interactive blog. It can be posted to daily. The most successful blogs are posted to frequently. We recommend 2-3 times a week, but some blogs, especially those that offer resources and links to other articles and blogs, are updated daily.

Getting back to the fishing pond, you need more than one or two lines in order to catch more fish. You need to have a website, an ezine, *and* a blog.

Is that too much for an independent professional to do? We think not. Your website, once created, is in place. Ideally, your ezine should be published at least monthly, and you need to either outsource it or find a half-day per month to write and publish it.

Your blog, once it is set up, can take you 10-20 minutes to post. Because you are spending a certain amount of time reading, researching and consulting, you only have to summarize your thoughts, link to other sites and blogs, and post. This is not creating more work for you; you are reading, researching, and reflecting all the time. Simply report out to your readers what you are doing.

What this Book Will Do

To shorten the learning curve, we have created a set of tutorials, audio links, an ebook so you can set up your blog and get it going in a few hours.

Let us be clear about what this book will do and what it won't do.

Here are our intended outcomes for you:

- Help you attract new clients
- Help you establish an online presence for little \$ and little tech skills
- Help you establish expertise and credibility
- Help you become known
- Help you establish dialogue with readers and keep fingers on client pulse
- Help you use a marketing tool that will save you time, money and grief
- Help you cast your marketing net wide and far so you can get back to working with clients and earning the money you deserve
- Help you create a personal brand
- Help you generate dialogue with readers
- Help you build a professional, attractive and customized blog
- Help you with posting articles, topics, and writing quality
- Help you establish a presence among the business blogosphere where you can capitalize on networking opportunities

Here's what this book won't cover in any depth:

- How blogs work technically (they just do, trust it)
- The history of blogging (other books and blogs have done this - see Appendix D for a brief history of blogging)
- The power of blogs vs. mainstream media (see any large blog)
- The impact of blogs on culture, politics, religion or journalism
- How great blogs are
- How great bloggers are
- How clever some people in their blogs can be
- How great the technical aspects of blogging are

We appreciate all those who have created articles and posts about blogging, the history of blogging, and the cultural impact that blogging is having in our world and information systems. The impact of blogging is and will be enormous. We are just starting to see its impact. Nobody knows where it is heading. No one can predict how advertising and marketing will be affected by bloggers. But make no mistake; this is truly an opportunity to communicate to others in a way never before.

Take advantage of this medium. Now.

Pros and Cons

Some say that the downfall will be too many blogs, too many posts, too many voices all speaking at once. It is true that the majority of well-read blogs have millions of readers, and the majority of blogs have only a few. Your blog may start with only a few readers. It is up to you to grow and to attract new readers. You must post quality articles of value or readers won't stay and may not return.

Never underestimate the power of the written word. It's not about the numbers. It's about quality of readers. You want to keep the interests of those people who will eventually convert to clients. So don't lose heart if you start out with a small number of readers.

Fear or enthusiasm really doesn't matter. Whether you see blogs as having potential for good or evil doesn't matter. Blogs are happening, they are changing the way we get information. You can choose to be part of the revolution, or a spectator.

This book is not going to repeat all there is to know about blogs. We will give you some links to articles we consider important if you wish to have more background on just how this whole blogging revolution began.

What Do You Want Your Blog to Do?

We want you to focus on what blogging will bring to your business. It starts with YOU. What do you want your blog to do?

You may not be able to answer that question right now, if you don't understand the possibilities. We suggest you take a tour of a few suggested business blogs to get a sense of what others do with their blogs.

When you visit these sites, notice the links to other blogs, usually contained in the side columns. Visit a few blogs, but don't get overwhelmed. Keep in mind how you want your blog to look, to feel, and what you want your readers to experience.

Notice the designs on these blogs, and you will note they aren't all pretty. Some look exactly like others, because they've used common templates. Yours doesn't have to be the same as all the others if you follow our guides for setting up your blog and learn to use the features that your blog service provides.

We'll help you take advantage of what's available for having a blog that reflects your business branding look.

Start out Right

We highly recommend you take the first steps with us before you begin to design or post on your blog. Starting off right will help you create the results you want and will keep your blog on purpose and on target with your readers. Of course, if you've already started your blog, good for you. With our system, we'll help you build a better blog.

Here is the outline we will follow:

1. A brief background on blogging for business
2. 7-step blog work sheet: Get clear on your two purposes for blogging
3. A set of how-to tutorials with step-by-step instructions for setting up and customizing the look of your blog (time-saving tips)
4. How to write interesting content, posting etiquette, differences between ezine articles and blogging posts, commenting
5. Marketing with your blog (how to get clients, how to drive traffic, how to submit to directories and search engines, how to accept ads)
6. Interviews - 15 questions we asked 25 successful business bloggers on how they do it
7. Resource links - blogs to visit, add-on services available

Thanks for joining us in the Blog Revolution! Now let's get to building a better blog...

Patsi Krakoff and Denise Wakeman

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