



**Consultants for blog and podcast  
development, design, recording,  
writing and launch services  
to American business**

a WHITE PAPER

# **Navigating the Blogosphere**

**a quick overview on the state of blogging**

**August, 2006**

## FAST BLOGGING FACTS

"Just the facts,  
ma'am."

Sgt. Joe Friday  
on *Dragnet*

- ◆ There are **147 million** adults that use the Internet, **57 million** of those read blogs, while **12 million** keep a blog (*Pew Internet & American life Project Report - Feb-April, 2006*).
- ◆ Currently there are **37.3 Million** weblogs and the blogosphere continues to double about every 6 months (*Source: Technorati - July, 2006*).
- ◆ Only **5.8%** of Fortune 500 companies and only **1.5%** of Forbes 200 Best Small Companies currently have a weblog (*eMarketer - July, 2006*).
- ◆ **One out of 20** US adults have created a blog and 11% of Internet users are regular blog readers (*Source: Pew Internet & American Life Project Report*).
- ◆ In a survey of the attitudes toward blogs, **77%** of the respondents thought the regularly updated journals were a useful way to get insights into the products and services they should buy (*Source: BBC Report*).

## THE BLOGOSPHERE

What's being called the "Blogosphere" is the new electronic world for selling and promoting products, services, individuals, brands, causes and points of view. Historically, blogs started out as "personal online journals or diaries." They have now morphed into a viable, robust online marketing tool.



Since 2003, the blogosphere has experienced a doubling in size about every six months to reach a currently tracked 37.3 million Weblogs. In the past three years, the number of blogs tracked has grown over 60 times its size (*Technorati - July, 2006*).



This explosion has still to impact corporate bloggers. Only 5.8% of Fortune 500 companies and only 1.5% of Forbes 200 Best Small Companies currently have a weblog (*eMarketer - July, 2006*).



Of those corporations that are blogging, a market influence analytics company recently conducted a survey which polled persons responsible for maintaining or monitoring blogs within their companies and found: 64% started their blog because they felt they needed to participate in the medium rather than satisfy a specific need, 75% noticed increase media attention and/or web traffic and 76% blogged at least once per week (*Source: Cymfony - July, 2006*).



## HOW ARE BLOGS BEING USED TODAY?

Today, blogs that have been created cover a huge diversity of topics, personalities and opinions. Bloggers use this powerful tool to express themselves, document personal experiences, stay in touch and share practical knowledge or skills with others. They are also used to motivate, entertain, inform and network and sell.

Early-adopting corporations have been using blogs since they were first invented and each company has different objectives.



**General Motors** is a prolific blogger. They currently operate GM Fast Lane, GM FYI and others. Recent topics have been on E85 Ethanol Fuel, Car Sales, Jay Leno & The Camaro Concept Car and a Couple That Met Because of Their Solstice GM Car. <http://fastlane.gmblogs.com/>



**Dell Computer** just launched the Dell One 2 One blog. In it a number of bloggers have posted entries on their new XPS 700, Customer Service, the Flaming Notebook and Remote Support. Their blog entries get a lot of comments. <http://www.dellone2one.com/default.aspx>



**Boeing's** VP of Marketing blogs on topics like: the 777, Year 2025, Aviation Competition, and Mythbusting. <http://www.boeing.com/randy/>



**IBM**, a pioneer in corporate blogging, has more than fifty active bloggers covering topics on Social Networking, Distributed Computing, Software Architecture and other arcane subjects an IT geek would love. <http://www-03.ibm.com/developerworks/blogs/>



**Wal-Mart**, the worlds largest retailer also blogs with its Wal-Mart Facts. Because they've been vilified in the news lately, they try to get out their side of the story using comments from employees. <http://www.walmartfacts.com/LifeAtWalmart/>

Blogs create a personal relationship with the customer and provide an inside look into the company in ways not possible with other forms of online media.





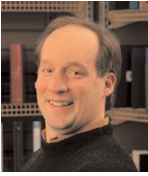
## WHY BLOG?

You've heard a lot about weblogs or blogs. That's because blogs have evolved from a highly personal form of communication on the Internet to a powerful new medium for business. Blog marketing is for you if you seek a low-cost, high-results tool for:

- ◆ **Direct Communications** - Speak directly and candidly with your customers.
- ◆ **Brand Building** - Establish an additional channel to put your brand in front of the customer and keep shaping its unique identity.
- ◆ **Competitive Differentiation** - Set yourself apart from the competition, allowing you to introduce your brand to prospects.
- ◆ **Relational Marketing** - Build personal, long-lasting relationships with customers that foster trust. Let your customers join the debate and give their say about your current product range - what's good and what's bad.
- ◆ **Discover and Exploit the Niches** - Uncover and sell to niches in your industry that you might not have realized existed and were underserved.
- ◆ **Media & Public Relations** - See the blog as a tool of communication, not only to your existing customers, but also to the rest of the world. Use the blog to give small hints about new products, create a hype, start rumours, etc. Make the press pay attention.
- ◆ **Reputation Management** - Manage your online reputation as a business that is an early-adopter of new technology.
- ◆ **Position You as Expert** - Articulate your viewpoints, knowledge, and expertise on matters pertaining to your industry.
- ◆ **Intranet & Project Management** - Blogs make excellent, easy-to-use applications for internal communications within an organization.
- ◆ **Host Your Blog On Your Website** - The more people read your blog and starts linking to it, the better search engine placements you will get. Not only for your blog, but also for your main website.
- ◆ **Search Engine Marketing** - A blog increases your presence on major search engines like Google and Yahoo! It's well known that Google loves blogs - blogs entries only take a few days before they are indexed, and often their search engine placements increase rapidly.



## BLOGS - THE HUMAN SIDE OF BUSINESS



Blogs put a human face on business leaders, products, services and issues enhancing the value of your organization to the consumer. In fact, your readers often become your most passionate word-of-mouth ambassadors. Through their own global links on the Internet, they can reach millions of others with just one mouse click.

Search engines also become your online marketing workhorses. Thanks to the technology inherent in the platform, blogs are very search engine friendly. Components like comments, trackbacks, RSS, even the way blogs are written have great appeal to search engines. To put it simply, search engines love blogs!

Not only that, mainstream media ranging from *The Wall Street Journal*, *CNN*, *NPR* and *USA Today*, to your local newspaper, all monitor what's happening on blogs. That's free publicity for you, and plenty of it.

## WHAT DO I WRITE ABOUT?



This is a question that is often asked. There are plenty of topics you can cover. It largely depends on the audience you want to reach and the core message you wish to convey. Not only are the subjects you cover important, but the way they are written make all the difference.

Blogs are meant to be written in a style that is conversational, informal and friendly. They have a "voice" that sounds personal not canned. A blog reader will notice right away that the blog posting is merely a press release and not someone's viewpoint.

Blogs enable a writer's personality to shine through so that prospects and customers get a feel for who you are and the value you and your company can provide.

Posting to a blog is easy! An integrated blogging platform is remarkably simple to use and allows for easy updating of content, managing user access, editing, comments, searching and subject organization. It's specifically designed for the non-technical user who doesn't know HTML.



## LEVERAGING YOUR BLOG



In business, blogging has become synonymous with "creating buzz" or getting the right kinds of attention for your commercial messages. That's because blogging bundles the human touch with state-of-the-art, low-cost technology. The result: *you get to conduct media relations and marketing campaigns from your blogs, in real time as the need arises, and do so at little expense.*

In media relations, blogging is quickly replacing the standard press release and requests for formal interviews with the mainstream media.

The media monitors blogs, picks up your postings and gives tremendous reach to your messages by discussing them in print, Internet and broadcast. It's not unusual to get calls from reporters out of the blue! In turn, you can comment on all this media attention on your blog, reinforcing your message and attracting even more coverage. In short, your blog can create a unique Multiplier Effect in media relations.

For example, through a companion technology RSS (Really Simple Syndication), your blog postings are syndicated among the millions of global bloggers who integrate these feeds into their own blog.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is another technical tool for wide distribution of your message. In a nutshell, SEO is a strategy which increases the odds that your blog posting will not only get picked up by the major search engines such as Google and Yahoo!, but also get a high ranking.

**Technorati** is another site which operates much like search engines for providing greater reach for your blog. **Technorati** scans millions of blogs and publishes those whose content is provocative, solid and topical. By observing what **Technorati** publishes, you can learn to shape your own content in such a way as to be picked up by this technology.



## APEX BLOG SERVICES

Apex Marketing Group provides a number of blog services to help make sure your blog content is targeted specifically for the audience you want to reach. They include:



- ◆ **Strategic Consultation** - Helping you use blogs as online marketing tools
- ◆ **Custom Design** - Intergrate your blog so that it maintains the existing look, feel and functionality of your existing website.
- ◆ **Platform Implementation** - Make sure that the blog can integrate in your existing environment as well as function effectively in the major browsers.
- ◆ **Training/Coaching** - Provide an experienced coach to help guide you through the management and writing of your blog. In the end, you should be able to manage the entire system yourself.
- ◆ **Establishing A Blog Policy** - This serves as your set of operating guidelines, a way for your readers to know the standards to which you're holding yourself and what they can expect from you in terms of reliability and honesty.
- ◆ **Posting Guidelines** - This includes such things as a posting quota, style considerations, and writing in a way commensurate with blogging best practices.
- ◆ **Outsourced Content Production** - If you don't have the resources to produce content in-house, we can provide a highly-qualified writer who understands your industry to assist you.
- ◆ **Content Aggregation Via RSS Feeds** - Using a technology call Really Simple Syndication (RSS) we provide pertinent industry-related content served up daily. Your site becomes a valuable library of industry information.

Ours is a turnkey approach with experienced blog professionals who guide you through the process step-by-step.

Not only do we provide the most robust blog services on the market today, we back it up with training and support. You'll get a complete system and the knowledge you need to make full use of it.



## APEX BLOG CONSULTING

An Apex Marketing Group blog integration is a turn-key project. We work with your internal staff to integrate the blog into your existing website or create a completely separate blog.

We will consult with you to determine the situation that best meets your blogging and communications needs. Once set up, you may want to manage the process yourself. Or, you may want to have an ongoing relations with Apex Marketing Group to provide consulting, infrastructure, administrative and content support.

You will always have complete access and control over your blog through both the administrative and editorial portions of the blog so that you have complete control over the content.

A turn-key package starts at \$2995.

Feel free to contact us at:



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