



Marketing How-To Guide

Marketing How-To Guide:

Your Template for Creative Blog Marketing

◆ Exclusively for Premium members



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Marketing How-To Guide

Your Template for Creative Blog Marketing

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INTRODUCTION

Unless you've been living under a rock, you've heard the words "blog" and "blogging." Blogs have been mentioned in publications as diverse as *People* and *The Economist*. Since entering the mainstream five years ago, blogs have become something of a cultural phenomenon.



In January 2005, *Fortune* listed blogs in its "10 Tech Trends to Watch" and *Harvard Business Review* named blogs as one of the "Breakthrough Ideas for 2005." The May 2, 2005, cover story of *Business Week* was "Blogs Will Change Your Business." *Time* magazine named "You" as its Person of the Year for 2006, giving a nod to the growing influence and popularity of blogs and other forms of social media.

Businesses listened. Many companies have added blogs to their marketing arsenals. Should you?



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Introduction ... continued

This guide will help you delve beneath the hype and discover what blogging can do for your company's marketing efforts. It will demonstrate that blogging is a tool you can add to your marketing arsenal rather than a cure-all to fix all your marketing challenges.

Our goal is to demystify blogging and help you determine where the tool might be appropriate.



Sources of Information

This guide would not have been possible without the collective intelligence of the many people who authored articles for our Web site, participated in our online seminars, and wrote thought-provoking books on the topic.

A complete list of reference materials appears in the Appendix at the end of the guide.



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Introduction ... continued

Special Thanks and Appreciation

We offer special thanks to the participants of MarketingProfs' Thought Leaders Summit, "Blogging for Marketing":

- **Stephan Spencer**, founder and president of Netconcepts
- **Toby Bloomberg**, president of Bloomberg Marketing
- **Seth Godin**, best-selling author, speaker, and founder of Squidoo.com
- **Shel Israel**, cofounder of Conferenza
- **B.L. Ochman**, head of the creative team at whatsnextonline.com
- **Steve Rubel**, formerly with CooperKatz & Co., now with Me2Revolution (a division of Edelman)
- **Robert Scoble**, formerly with Microsoft, now VP of Media Development at PodTech.net
- **Doc Searls**, highly respected technology writer, published author, and blogger
- **Debbie Weil**, an online marketing and corporate blogging consultant; her web site is debbieweil.com

In addition, we thank **Jeremy Wright** whose seminar, "Truth of Blog Marketing: Reaching Customer, Building Your Brand," brought us up to date with current thinking.

WHAT IS A BLOG?

The word blog is short for Web log. Once considered online diaries, blogs have morphed into an assembly of a person's thoughts, opinions and ideas. The focus can range from a single subject to daily musings. They often include facts and references in addition to personal opinions.

The most recent entry (called a post) is listed at the top of the blog with previous posts listed below or archived. Most blogs allow readers to comment on individual posts. The conversations that ensue from these comments are the power behind blogs.

Since blogs are updated frequently, people who are interested in the subject matter or the author's opinions return regularly. This distinguishes blogs from traditional Web sites, which are fairly static, giving people little reason to return once they have found the information they need.

The power of blogs is far greater than the number of people who read an individual post. Since bloggers often link to other blogs, what is said about your company or its products could potentially be read by an incredibly large audience. Much like buzz or word-of-mouth marketing, blogging has the potential to reach an audience you could never reach with traditional marketing vehicles.

Technorati, the first search engine designed specifically for blogs, currently tracks more than 112 million blogs.

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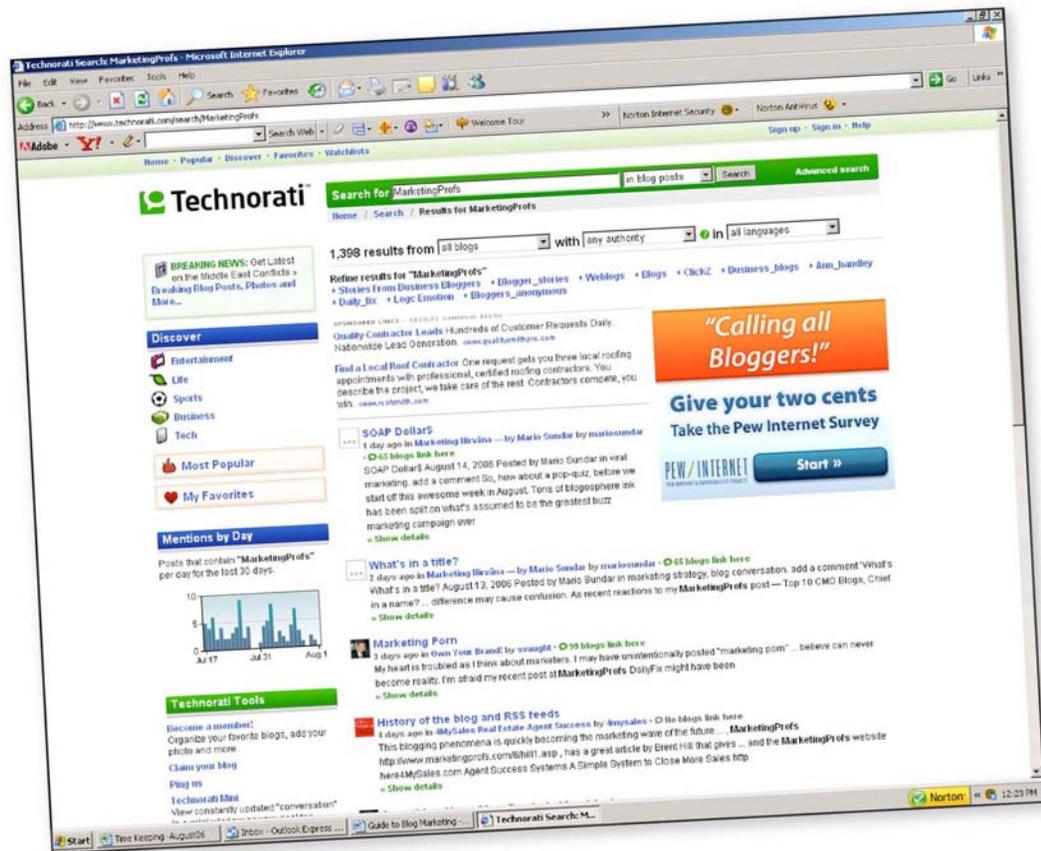
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What is a Blog? ... continued

What Is the Blogosphere?

The world of blogs is called the blogosphere. To locate a blog on a specific topic, go to a blogging search engine such as Technorati (www.technorati.com). You can then enter a company's name, the name of one of its specific products, a company URL, or a person's name to see what is being said about the company, product or person and who is saying it.

When we entered "MarketingProfs," we discovered the company was mentioned in 1,398 blog posts.



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What is a Blog? ... continued

Getting Started

The beauty of blogging is that it doesn't require knowledge of programming or HTML. Of course, those talents might come in handy, but there is software specifically designed to allow the complete novice to blog. Most packages offer templates, and some allow you to customize.

Blogging software falls into two categories:

1. **Hosted solutions**, which remain on the service provider's server
2. **Independent solutions**, where the software is loaded on to your Web server

Here are five blogging software packages:

- **Blogger** (www.blogger.com/start)
- **TypePad** (www.typepad.com)
- **Blogware** (<http://home.blogware.com>)
- **WordPress** (<http://wordpress.org>)
- **Movable Type** (www.movabletype.com)





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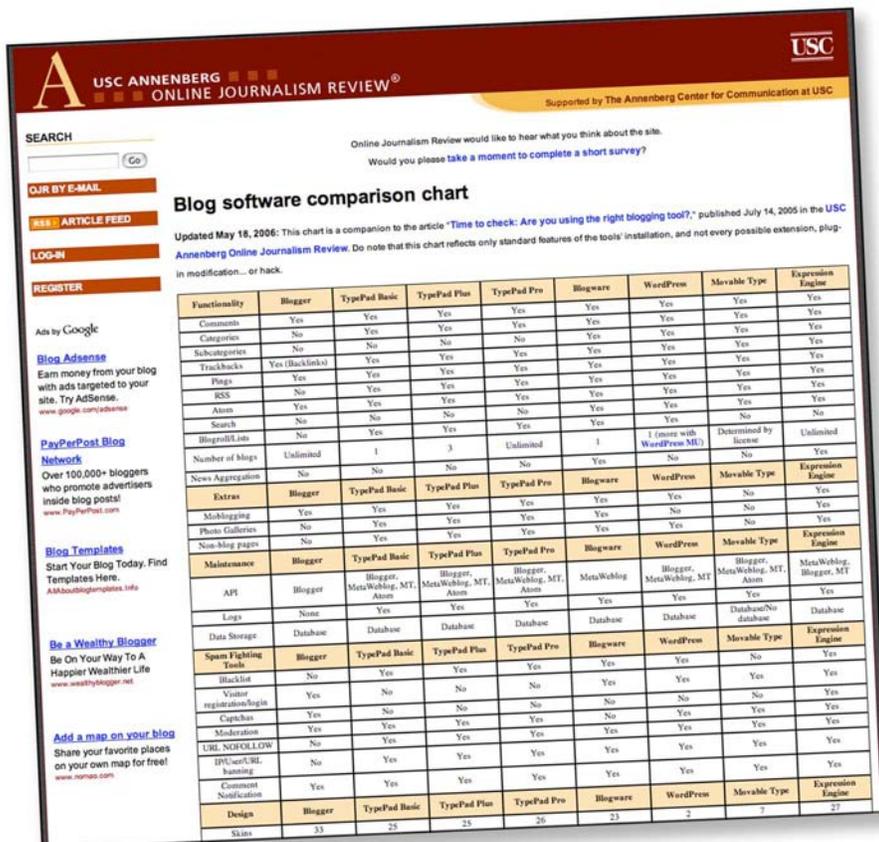
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What is a Blog? ... continued

For a detailed comparison of these, check The Annenberg Center for Communication at USC (www.ojr.org/ojr/images/blog_software_comparison.cfm).

There is no right answer as to which software solution is best. You may want to begin with a relatively simple hosted solution and gradually move to an independent solution as your comfort level increases. Blogger is currently the most popular blogging platform, and its services are free. But that doesn't necessarily make it the best option, as many bloggers switch to another service as they become more comfortable with blogging.

You should explore each option and research what other users have to say about their experiences.



USC ANNEBERG ONLINE JOURNALISM REVIEW
Supported by The Annenberg Center for Communication at USC

SEARCH:

OUR BY E-MAIL:

ARTICLE FEED:

LOG-IN:

REGISTER:

Ads by Google

Blog AdSense
Earn money from your blog with ads targeted to your site. Try AdSense.
www.google.com/adsense

PayPerPost Blog Network
Over 100,000+ bloggers who promote advertisers inside blog posts!
www.PayPerPost.com

Blog Templates
Start Your Blog Today. Find Templates Here.
AM.bloggerblogtemplates.info

Be a Wealthy Blogger
Be On Your Way To A Happier Wealthier Life
www.wealthy-blogger.net

Add a map on your blog
Share your favorite places on your own map for free!
www.nytimes.com

Online Journalism Review would like to hear what you think about the site.
Would you please take a moment to complete a short survey?

Blog software comparison chart

Updated May 18, 2006. This chart is a companion to the article "Time to check: Are you using the right blogging tool?," published July 14, 2005 in the USC Annenberg Online Journalism Review. Do note that this chart reflects only standard features of the tools' installation, and not every possible extension, plug-in modification... or hack.

Functionality	Blogger	TypePad Basic	TypePad Plus	TypePad Pro	Blogware	WordPress	Movable Type	Expression Engine
Comments	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Categories	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Subcategories	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Trackbacks	Yes (backlink)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Plugs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
RSS	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Atom	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Search	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Blogroll/Link	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1 (more with WordPress MU)	Determined by license	Unlimited
Number of blogs	Unlimited	1	3	Unlimited	1	No	No	Yes
News Aggregation	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Extras	Blogger	TypePad Basic	TypePad Plus	TypePad Pro	Blogware	WordPress	Movable Type	Expression Engine
Mobile Blogging	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Photo Galleries	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Non-blog pages	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maintenance	Blogger	TypePad Basic	TypePad Plus	TypePad Pro	Blogware	WordPress	Movable Type	Expression Engine
API	Blogger	Blogger, MetaWeblog, MT, Atom	Blogger, MetaWeblog, MT, Atom	Blogger, MetaWeblog, MT, Atom	MetaWeblog	Blogger, MetaWeblog, MT	Blogger, MetaWeblog, MT, Atom	MetaWeblog, Blogger, MT
Logs	None	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Data Storage	Database	Database	Database	Database	Database	Database	Database/No database	Database
Spam Fighting Tools	Blogger	TypePad Basic	TypePad Plus	TypePad Pro	Blogware	WordPress	Movable Type	Expression Engine
Blacklist	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Visitor registration/login	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Captcha	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Moderation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
URL SHORTCUT	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
IP/geo/URL banning	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Comment Notification	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	WordPress	Movable Type	Expression Engine
Design	Blogger	TypePad Basic	TypePad Plus	TypePad Pro	Blogware	WordPress	Movable Type	Expression Engine
Skins	33	25	25	26	23	2	7	27

SHOULD YOUR COMPANY CONSIDER BLOGGING?

In the introduction to his book *Blog Marketing*, Jeremy Wright states, “Blogs are not only here to stay, but they *will* have an effect on your business.” This opinion was seconded at the MarketingProfs Thought Leaders Summit,



“Blogging for Marketing,” where Stephan Spencer claimed, “The early birds—those companies that got a head start—are likely to achieve celebrity status, generate buzz, and garner attention in mainstream media.”

There are well over 100 million blogs in the world. With so many conversations taking place, the reality is that some of these conversations probably include discussions about your company, your products or services, and issues that are important in your industry. Your customers are talking among themselves. Wouldn't you like to eavesdrop on these conversations? Blogging allows you to do just that.

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Should Your Company Consider Blogging? ... continued

What This Means to Marketing

Blogging provides a mechanism for an organization to communicate directly with its customers. It can be used to extend your brand and get feedback on both your company and its products. It can be far more effective than focus groups for gathering opinions about products, since it can provide feedback throughout the life cycle of a product.

Once upon a time, marketing was primarily one-way communication *from* companies *to* customers. Marketing messages were broadcast via print, radio, television, billboards, public relations and direct marketing channels. The goal was to reach customers through one or more of these vehicles.

The Internet has radically changed the marketing experience by removing geography as a limiting factor. The Internet has increased the number of potential customers a company can reach through its marketing efforts. Potential customers can search for just about anything on the Internet.

Blogging takes marketing advances one step further by transforming marketing into a *two-way* conversation. Blogging allows organizations to initiate conversations *with* their audience. Blogging conversations can also occur between customers and potential customers and your competition and existing or potential customers. A wonderful byproduct of this conversation between your company and its customers via your blog is that you and your customers begin to better understand one another. Gaining a better understanding of your customers allows you to more effectively and efficiently market to them. This, of course, lowers your marketing costs!

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Should Your Company Consider Blogging? ... continued

As Doc Searls pointed out in the MarketingProfs Thought Leaders Summit, “Markets are conversations, and conversation is fire. And you only need one match to start a fire. That’s a lot of what blogging is about. It’s not putting out fires; it’s, in fact, starting fires. But fires in the positive sense—fires in the sense of an idea that can spread quickly.”

This opinion was seconded by Stephan Spencer. “There’s a great example in the *Fortune* article [January 10, 2005, “Why There’s No Escaping the Blog”] about the solar-powered backpack that the guy sent through to the

TreeHugger blog, who blogged about it, which was then picked up by another blogger. And, the next thing you knew, it’s being talked about in Gizmodo and sales shot through the roof.”

B.L. Ochman believes marketers should be interested in blogging because of the demographics of blog readers.

“A recent survey taken by Bloggads showed that blog users tend to be young; they’re affluent, white, male and broadband-connected. Those are really good people to reach with marketing messages.”

(MarketingProfs Seminar: “What Every Marketer Needs to Know Now”)



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Should Your Company Consider Blogging? ... continued

Eight Reasons to Consider Blogging

There are as many reasons for an organization to consider blogging as there are organizations. However, most of the reasons will fit into one of the following eight categories. Quite often a blog may combine several of these elements, as you will see in the examples provided.

1. Be viewed as an expert.

Many companies actively participate in thought-leadership activities such as writing for industry newsletters, participating in or hosting professional conferences, and producing white papers on subjects of interest in their respective industries. Blogging provides another vehicle your organization can use to position itself as a thought leader.

At the MarketingProfs Thought Leaders Summit, Stephan Spencer suggested, "Saying nice things about your competitors (and providing links to them) will place you as an authority above those companies because they may not be prepared to take the risk to link out themselves." Your organization does not exist in a vacuum. If you point to a competitor's success, you demonstrate to your customers that you are aware of what is happening elsewhere and are willing to admit when another organization does something well.

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Should Your Company Consider Blogging? ... continued

Wells Fargo (<http://blog.wellsfargo.com/StudentLoanDown>) started a new blog in September 2006 to provide information on student loans. As the first financial institution to tackle this subject, it has positioned itself to be a thought leader on the topic.

Google (<http://googleblog.blogspot.com>) provides insights into product and technology news, albeit mostly its own products and technology.

Starwood Hotels (www.thelobby.com) reports on worldwide travel to help keep Starwood Preferred Guests on top of the latest trends. It has assembled a team of travel writers to contribute to its blog.

ING (www.ingblogs.com/mycupofcha) covers general, marketing, branding, e-business, and strategy and organization for the Asia-Pacific region.

Cox Communications (www.digitalstraighttalk.com) provides an inside guide to news, views and issues in broadband communications and the rapidly changing digital world.

General Mills (www.realbakingwithrose.com) shares its baking knowledge and expertise.

Skype (<http://skypejournal.com>) writes about the next generation of conversation tools, starting with Skype.

Texas Instruments (<http://blogs.ti.com>) offers technical support and information about its products.

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Should Your Company Consider Blogging? ... continued

2. Develop better customer relationships.

The nature of customers keeps changing and becoming more distant. We have evolved into a one-size-fits-all society where products are designed to meet the needs of a broad spectrum of customers rather than each customer individually. Whereas customers once dealt directly with a product's maker, today they make their purchases at "big box" stores or using another medium that does not afford them the opportunity to discuss their personal needs or wants with the designer. The customer may choose the color of the product, as long as it fits within the colors available. Unless the customer is purchasing from a custom tailor, the customer has no say in the design of what he or she buys.

Since customers can no longer influence the products and services they purchase, many think that organizations are not interested in what they want. Blogging can change this perception because it provides a channel for and fosters communication. It allows you to "reach out and touch" your customers in a way that other mediums do not afford.

Microsoft is an example of a company that has successfully used blogs in this manner. Product developers look at blog feedback prior to making significant changes to applications. In fact, many of Microsoft's product developers have daily contact with customers via blogs.

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Should Your Company Consider Blogging? ... continued

General Motors is another company that has used blogs to improve its customer relationships. Its FastLane blog (<http://fastlane.gmblogs.com>) creates a vehicle for customers to discuss what is important to them.

A third company that uses blogs to foster customer relationships is **Wells Fargo** (<http://blog.wellsfargo.com>). Its first foray into blogging, Guided by History, puts events and responses to natural disasters into a context that helps readers prepare for the future. By historically analyzing natural disasters, Wells Fargo demonstrates its long history in California as well as its sincere desire to provide assistance to its customers.

Dell recently announced that since the inception of its blog Direct2Dell (www.direct2dell.com), negative blog postings about the company have fallen from 49% to 22%. This means that before the company started blogging, half of all blog posts about Dell were negative. Now, because of the communication and community that the company has created with its customers, less than one-fourth of blog posts about the company are negative.



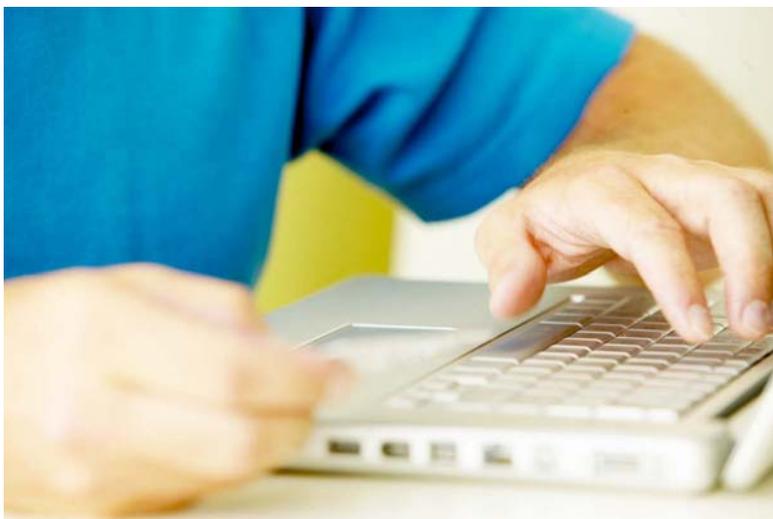
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Should Your Company Consider Blogging? ... continued

Intuit QuickBooks (<http://quickbooks.blogs.com>) has restarted its blogging efforts by providing information about QuickBooks, stories about the customers who use it and tips from the people who work on it every day.

Clip-n-Seal (www.clip-n-seal.com/blog.htm) offers product and company news for its product that makes it easy to close and reseal bags.

Their informal nature makes blogs an extremely effective communication tool. They are generally free of corporate doublespeak and are written by individuals who are passionate about the subject matter. By listening to customers and engaging them, not only is customer satisfaction increased, but customers can be transformed into company champions



or evangelists.

Once these readers become evangelists for your company and your blog, they will do their best to promote both when they encounter other people both online and offline.

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Should Your Company Consider Blogging? ... continued

3. Attract new customers.

“You may not have millions, or even thousands, of customers, but in the world of blogging, everyone has an equal voice. No matter how big or small your business, or how many people are interested in your products, blogging provides a unique opportunity for you to talk to your potential customers—at least those who happen to be online and reading—and for them to talk to you.” (*Blog Marketing*, page 25)

“When you give customers the power to embrace your brand, they will take your brand’s message with them wherever they go, telling others about their experiences with your company and thereby extending your brand in a positive way that would not have otherwise been possible.” (*Blog Marketing*, page 27)

Viacom (<http://realworldroadrules.blogspot.com>) provides information about reality-TV shows.

Consider also how customers are now using the Internet to research companies and products they buy. If you run a well-maintained blog that focuses on your products and industry, you will likely rank very well in search results for your product and industry. (We mention how this happens in more detail in reason 7.) This means that people who are searching for information about your industry might come across your blog, where they otherwise might never have heard of you.

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Should Your Company Consider Blogging? ... continued

4. Make your company more “human” to your customers.

“We live in a time when most people don’t trust big companies. Headlines gush with tales of malfeasance, abuse and old-fashioned plunder, but that’s just part of it. There is a general perception that large companies are run by slick lawyers and book-fixing accountants who oversee armies of obedient, drone-like employees.” (*Naked Conversations*, page 9)

At a time when everything seems to move at breakneck speed and customers often feel like a number, imagine the impact you could make if your organization were viewed as more communicative, more transparent and more open. Customers want to feel connected, and a blog can help establish that connection with your organization.

“Blogs are a great way to build trust, because they allow you—a real person, and not some corporate marketing brochure—to communicate with your customers, users, and community more regularly than any other medium allows.” (*Blog Marketing*, page 28)

This sentiment was echoed by Shel Israel at the MarketingProfs Thought Leaders Summit when he called blogs conversational marketing. “It’s getting closer to your customers by showing them the real people doing real jobs inside a company and listening closely to what company or other customers and constituencies are thinking about you.”

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Should Your Company Consider Blogging? ... continued

When **Dell** introduced its blog (www.direct2dell.com/default.aspx), it included videos "inside" Dell with posts from regular employees. This is similar to the approach Robert Scoble took when interviewing product designers for Microsoft. By showing real employees doing their jobs, both computer giants were able to demonstrate that their companies comprised people just like their customers.

McDonald's (<http://csr.blogs.mcdonalds.com/default.asp>) demonstrates corporate social responsibility through the eyes of Vice President Bob Langert and the others at McDonald's who work on corporate responsibility issues that matter. Get personal perspectives on the issues, meet the people behind the programs, and hear open assessments of the challenges they face.

Southwest Airlines (www.blogsouthwest.com) provides information about its employees, customers, airplanes and airports.

Wal-Mart (<http://walmartfacts.com/lifeatwalmart>) provides insights about the company from the employees' perspective.

Kodak's blog, (<http://1000words.kodak.com>) *A Thousand Words*, is home to stories from Kodak employees who love what they do and want to share their enthusiasm with others.

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Should Your Company Consider Blogging? ... continued

5. Provide a forum to test new product ideas.

When planning a new product, blogging provides an excellent tool to gather firsthand knowledge from potential users. Microsoft is a classic example of a company that uses blogs to drive product development. Developers and product managers use blogs to learn how customers respond to their products and what enhancements they would like to see in future versions.

Once the product is launched, bloggers will enumerate the faults of your product. Blogging allows you to collaborate with users before a product is launched so that you can avoid negative press in the blogosphere.

At the MarketingProfs Thought Leaders Summit, Robert Scoble, blogger extraordinaire, stated, "Here at Microsoft, I think there was actually a principle involved at the executive level where they wanted better customer relationships. They wanted better quality, and they knew that the product quality would go up if there was a tighter conversation."

Boeing (<http://boeingblogs.com/randy>) expands the conversations between Randy Tinseth, vice president of marketing for Boeing Commercial Airplanes in Seattle, and consumers about Boeing and its place in commercial aviation.

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Should Your Company Consider Blogging? ... continued

6. Know what is being said about your company.

Whether you're listening or not, people *are* talking about your organization and your products. In the days before blogs, such conversations were

simply word of mouth. Blogging has geometrically increased the number of people a customer can "tell" about their positive and negative experiences. Think of the blog as the old Wella Balsam commercial where "I told two friends and they told two friends and so on and so on and so on. ... "

Monitoring the blogosphere provides an organization with valuable information about what its customers, industry experts and even its competitors are saying about the organization and its products or services.

At the MarketingProfs Thought Leaders Summit, Robert Scoble claimed, "If you are a corporation and you are not listening to the blogosphere now, you are going to get in trouble because people are talking about you anyway." This sentiment was echoed by B.L. Ochman: "I don't think every company should blog, but I definitely do agree that every company better be paying attention to what's being said about them in blogs. It's a very reactive space, and you can put out fires just by responding."



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Should Your Company Consider Blogging? ... continued

7. Improve the ranking of your company's Web site with search engines.

Search engines constantly monitor the World Wide Web for changes to determine how to rank Web sites. Blog posts, as well as comments to blog posts, are picked up by search engine spiders as new information and thereby can increase the ranking of your organization's Web site. Inbound links can also improve your ranking in search engines.

How do you get inbound links? At the MarketingProfs Thought Leaders Summit, Robert Scoble explained, "Well, you have to change your page often. ... I'm not going to link to something that's static and hasn't changed since 1998. I'm going to link to something that gets updated often ... with new information, with interesting information." Therefore, bloggers are more likely to link to blogs within a Web site than to the same Web site without a blog.

Another consideration is that since blogs rank much better with search engines, you have a big advantage over competitors that are not blogging. If you blog about hygiene products for the restaurant industry, and your competitors don't have a blog, your thoughts and writings on the industry in your blog will do much better in search engine results. This will greatly help establish your company as an expert in this area, as opposed to your competitors that have only a Web site that they never update. Search engines favor sites that update frequently, which is why active blogs have an inherent advantage over static Web sites.

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Should Your Company Consider Blogging? ... continued

8. Provide company announcements in a new medium.

As blogs grow in number and popularity, news is often reported in blogs before it is reported in mainstream media. In fact, for smaller companies for which traditional media may not be willing to devote space, blogs offer a unique place to make announcements that would not be available elsewhere.

“Posts in your blog can often lead to coverage in mainstream and traditional media,” claims B.L. Ochman. She states that “reporters read blogs ... that’s where reporters are getting a lot of their information and leads these days.

You have more access to reporters through blogs than you do through traditional means, simply because reporters are blogging.”

(MarketingProfs Seminar: “What Every Marketer Needs to Know Now”)



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Should Your Company Consider Blogging? ... continued

Still Not Convinced Blogging Will Help Your Marketing Efforts?

The story of Thomas Mahon's rise to fame as a Savile Row tailor is the stuff of which legends are made. One of the youngest Savile Row tailors, Mahon set out to develop his clientele—people who are willing and able to spend more than \$5,000 for a custom-tailored suit.

A former advertising executive turned cartoonist and blogger, Hugh McLeod explained the benefits of blogging to Mahon, and they formed a partnership. McLeod helped Mahon set up a blog and directed traffic to Mahon's blog from his own blog.

Realizing that people would not want to buy his suits over the Internet, Mahon used his blog to demonstrate his knowledge and passion for the craft. He explained the cost of a Savile Row suit in terms of quality, hand-tailoring and individual attention.

His blog (www.englishcut.com) generated a great deal of interest, thus boosting his reputation and, concurrently, his sales. Within 10 weeks of launching his blog, sales of his suits rose 300%, and he widened his clientele from London to the world.

Although a wonderful tale, Mahon's success is not easily replicated. It was an aberration, but an aberration that demonstrates the marketing potential of blogs.

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Should Your Company Consider Blogging? ... continued

For the vast majority of companies, blogs may enhance existing marketing efforts over the long term. They are not a silver bullet that will magically improve market share or sales figures. Instead, coupled with other marketing efforts, they can enhance your brand, bring you closer to your customer and improve your organization's public image.

Business blogging has not yet reached its "tipping point." Many organizations are not convinced that blogs offer an effective ROI. One reason may be the difficulty of calculating the ROI for blogging. In traditional marketing, companies measure ROI by seeing how many products they sell after an ad campaign launches. How do you measure mind share that can result from a blog? You can't, which may make companies leery of pursuing blogging. You could measure the traffic a blog receives, but traffic does not necessarily equal increased sales.

Since the beginning of 2006, the number of Fortune 500 companies that blog has increased by 50%. Granted, the number that has blogs is only around 40, but the trend is definitely moving upward. In fact, the subject of Fortune 500 companies and blogs is so hot that it has its own Wiki (www.socialtext.net/bizblogs/index.cgi).

WHO SHOULD BLOG AND WHAT SHOULD THEY SAY?

Consider Your Strategic Direction

Before starting a company blog, pause, take a deep breath and consider what it is that you want to achieve. For example, a blog written by a subject-matter expert may reinforce your company as a thought leader, while one written by a technical-support expert might prevent a customer from contacting the company with a technical-support issue.

How do you determine the focus of your blog? Decide what issue it is that you want to engage in a conversation with your customers about and then decide how to go about it.

Five Important Things to Consider Before Starting to Blog

There are five important things to consider carefully before starting to blog:

1. Type of blog
2. Whether you will allow comments
3. How you will handle feedback
4. Selecting a blogger
5. Pitfalls to avoid



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Who Should Blog, and What Should They Say? ... continued

1. Type of Blog

Blogs come in all shapes and sizes; however, they generally fall into one of the following categories:

CEO blog. Despite its name, the CEO blog can be authored by any senior-level executive. By virtue of his or her position, the author is considered a thought leader who can provide an unfiltered view of the company. When done well, a CEO blog can build rapport and trust, and tell customers what is happening within the company.

“An open and honest public blog, written by an authoritative voice from within your company, allows your business to create a different type of experience between you and your customers: it allows you to create legitimate conversations that simply weren’t possible before online blogging.” (*Blog Marketing*, page 4)

General Motors’ FastLane Blog (<http://fastlane.gmblogs.com>) is a wonderful example of the CEO blog. GM uses this blog to announce new products, provide information for car enthusiasts and offer a channel where customers can communicate with company executives.

CEO blogs can foster communication with existing and potential customers *if* the author is able to write in a welcoming manner. Readers will be turned off if the author preaches or sermonizes to them. Likewise, they will probably not return if the blog is rife with corporate-speak.

Most CEO blogs fall into the category of thought leadership.

Your Template for Creative Blog Marketing

Who Should Blog, and What Should They Say? ... continued

One of the reasons blogs have caught the interest of so many people is that they are fun to read. The author is generally passionate about the topic as well as an expert.

Aggregate blog. Aggregate blogs are authored by several people. By using different voices and perspectives, they can position a company as a thought leader. General Motors' FastLane Blog has become an aggregate blog, where different senior-level executives speak about their area of expertise within the company.

This type of blog is increasing in popularity. By allowing several voices to represent the company, it removes the burden of frequent posting from one person. It also allows the company to develop conversations on a broader range of subjects than might be possible if a single person authored the blog.

Aggregate blogs can also be used to gather information from the media and other blogs and to engage several different voices to create a message. MarketingProfs' *Daily Fix* (www.mpdailyfix.com) is a classic example of gathering thought leaders from various companies to communicate their marketing perspective.

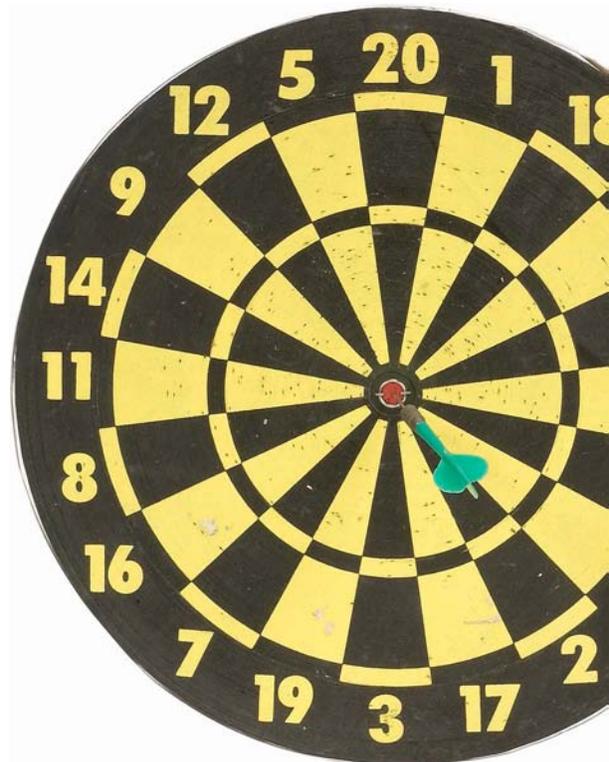
Your Template for Creative Blog Marketing

Who Should Blog, and What Should They Say? ... continued

Staff blog. Staff blogs allow companies to show their human side by letting employees speak honestly about their daily challenges and successes. Staff blogs empower employees to communicate directly with customers. According to Jeremy Wright, “Good staff blogs can influence your industry, improve your customers’ experiences, and empower your staff to help people.” (*Blog Marketing*, page 118)

Specialist blog. Much like the CEO blog, specialist blogs, which include marketing blogs, tend to provide a bigger picture than is typically found in staff blogs. Specialist blogs provide a venue for a company to develop conversations with customers about specific subjects. They create a space where customers can discuss what is important to them.

“Your blog needs to communicate more than just a standard marketing message. It needs to communicate something authentic, passionate, and authoritative—the exact types of things that come through if you are talking face-to-face with a customer.” (*Blog Marketing*, page 58)



MarketingProfs Marketing How-To Guide

Your Template for Creative Blog Marketing

Who Should Blog, and What Should They Say? ... continued

Customer evangelist blog. These are blogs written by your customers about your products. A classic example includes Starbucks (<http://starbucksgossip.typepad.com>). Many such blogs are driven by the consumer rather than the company they support. If your company discovers that some of your evangelists are blogging, you should do everything you can to reach out to these special customers, including linking to their blog, and reading them and regularly commenting on their blogs. These customers are making your life *much* easier, as they are promoting you to others. And like it or not, the word of a friend or even a third party about a company will almost always be more influential than information that comes directly from the company, which is automatically viewed as advertising.



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Who Should Blog, and What Should They Say? ... continued

2. Whether You Will Allow Comments

“Comments create communities and trust and spread knowledge even more feely than blog posts,” claims Jeremy Wright in *Blog Marketing*. Not everyone agrees with Wright. In fact, Dave Winer, often called the father of blogging, does not believe in comments. While that might work for him, if you want to reach out to your customers, you will probably want to allow them to leave comments on your blog. After all, if you don’t, they will leave their comments elsewhere. And it is highly likely that not allowing comments on your blog will lead to visitors writing negative posts and comments about this on other blogs.

If your goal is to establish a dialogue with your customers, and it definitely should be, you will probably want to include comments.

In an ideal world, your customers would never have anything negative to say about your company or its products. The reality, however, is quite different. Before starting a blog, it is important to decide how you will handle comments.

Due to the increasing rise of spambots, many blogs require commenters to type an illustrated word before submitting a comment. This prevents comment spam.

Your Template for Creative Blog Marketing

Who Should Blog, and What Should They Say? ... continued

Will comments be moderated?

If comments are moderated, that means that they are reviewed before they are posted to the blog. If you choose this route, you will need a process (and a person or persons) to review the comments in a timely manner. What does this mean? To the person who has a problem or a concern, 24 hours may be too long to wait for a response.

This leads to the question of how you will handle weekend coverage. Someone who has left a comment and does not see a response promptly will think that your company is not committed to having an open dialogue. It's guaranteed that this person will let others in the blogosphere know this. Most people will wait no more than two hours to see a post before being turned off. For some, the time frame will be even less.

Many companies such as General Motors monitor blogs for obscenities and sexist or racist comments only. This can be done relatively quickly, and the comment is then added to the blog.



Your Template for Creative Blog Marketing

Who Should Blog, and What Should They Say? ... continued

3. How You Will Handle Feedback

Respond to both positive and negative feedback.

Although tempting, to make the most out of positive feedback, it is important to do more than say "Thank you." This is an opportunity to turn a happy customer into an evangelist for your company, product or brand. This customer is already on your side and can tell his or her friends and colleagues with just a little help on your part. Responding to the comment helps foster a positive customer experience and further solidify the customer relationship.

Negative comments should always be addressed. Someone who is unhappy about the way he or she has been treated by your company is more likely to tell his or her friends and colleagues about the experience. This is your opportunity to change the person's attitude by building on the relationship. The fact that the person has taken the time to write a negative comment means that he or she wants a dialogue. This person wants to feel that his or her position has been heard and validated.

Negative comments should be handled very quickly. If getting all the details will take time, make sure to post something within 24 hours so that the person knows that someone at the company is taking his or her complaint seriously. If handled promptly and correctly, a negative comment can turn into a positive endorsement if the commenter feels that you are taking the complaint seriously and making an honest attempt to solve the problem. This can also make a positive impression on other readers as well.

MarketingProfs Marketing How-To Guide

Your Template for Creative Blog Marketing

Who Should Blog, and What Should They Say? ... continued

Decide if you want rules for comments. For example, many companies frown on the use of obscene language and do not allow such language in comments. If this is a guideline, be certain that it is prominently displayed, rather than hidden in FAQs.

Don't forget that your company and its products are being discussed on other blogs as well as your own. Monitor the blogosphere, and respond to those comments as well. Linking to the response on your own blog can greatly enhance communication. Plus, it is a visible sign to those who read the blog that your company takes all comments seriously.



Your Template for Creative Blog Marketing

Who Should Blog, and What Should They Say? ... continued

Three Rules for Responding to Comments

I. Respond quickly.

How quickly? Immediately would be wonderful, although it is also unrealistic. A good rule of thumb is the sooner the better. Think of a person who has posted a comment on your blog as a customer who has telephoned customer service with a problem. What type of turnaround would you offer? Do the same in your blog.

II. Be human.

Customers want to think that your company comprises real people, not automatons. This is not the time to respond with corporate-speak. Avoiding jargon can go a long way to defusing customer dissatisfaction.

You may discover that similar questions appear frequently. In that case, Jeremy Wright recommends posting a well-crafted response in your blog and pointing the person to that post. This can be far more successful than cutting and pasting a response.

III. Follow up to ensure resolution.

Even with all the will in the world, things do fall through the cracks. By following up on problems, you enhance the customer relationship.

If there is a problem, own up to it. It's never easy to admit when we're wrong, but if a company does this, it will grow in the eyes of its customers.

Your Template for Creative Blog Marketing

Who Should Blog, and What Should They Say? ... continued

4. Selecting a Blogger

The first decision to make is whether you want one voice representing your company or several. This may depend on the type of blog you have or the number of people who are willing to devote the time and energy into creating blog posts on a regular basis.

Some companies hire professional bloggers to write for them. Although not recommended by most experts, if there is no one on your staff who can assume the role of corporate blogger, it is an avenue to consider.

According to Doc Searls at the MarketingProfs Thought Leaders Summit: "I would say to senior management that what you need are born bloggers on your staff here and there. They don't have to be in marketing—in fact, it's better if they're not."

In her MarketingProfs' seminar, "What Every Marketer Needs to Know Now," B.L. Ochman states, "Don't let anyone blog who you wouldn't trust to represent the company in the media." In addition, she claims it is important that the blogger not come from PR as "this is not suitable in the blogosphere, and you will have negative feedback."

Also, if you choose to use existing employees as blog writers, make sure to pick people who have good writing skills. This seems obvious, but keep in mind that these people and the language they use will be representing your company. Also, choose writers who have a passion for your company. Readers are drawn to bloggers who are passionate about the topic they are writing about. If your bloggers view writing for your blog as a chore, it will come across to your readers, but passion is infectious.

Your Template for Creative Blog Marketing

Who Should Blog, and What Should They Say? ... continued

5. Pitfalls to Avoid

Pitching products. Blogs should be used to relay information, not to make sales pitches. Although you may announce a new product, readers will not read a blog that they see as nothing more than a glorified sales piece.

In her MarketingProfs seminar, “What Every Marketer Needs to Know Now,” B.L. Ochman says that “any blog that is an obvious attempt at self-promotion or that looks like it’s an advertising medium will not only be ignored, it will also be mocked by bloggers.” She then cites the classic example of the Dr. Pepper Raging Cow campaign. Dr. Pepper paid young bloggers to blog about the product. The blogosphere reacted negatively and started a boycott of all Dr. Pepper products. Why? Bloggers saw paying bloggers as a form of advertisement.

Does this mean you can never pat yourself or your company on the back in a post?

Blatant self-promotion is a turnoff. Who wants to read a company blog that repeatedly tells you how wonderful its products are? Would you believe the blogger? How long would you continue to read the blog? If done carefully, however, it’s fine to toot your own horn once in a while, as long as you do so with care.

MarketingProfs Marketing How-To Guide

Your Template for Creative Blog Marketing

Who Should Blog, and What Should They Say? ... continued

Posting without reviewing what you wrote. Although blogs involve frequent postings, this does not obfuscate the need to think before hitting enter. Remember, what you have posted will be picked up by other bloggers. Post in haste and you may live to regret it. A cautionary phrase you may hear is that “Google never forgets.”

Breaking news that is not yours to announce. Do not break news that should be coming from a different place within your organization. Do not leak financial results before they are posted or talk about product developments of which you are not involved. But as a news story is developing in the media, your blog’s readers will, in most cases, expect a quick reply on your blog. If you respond quickly and appropriately, a potential crisis situation can be defused, and your company can reap the praise of your customers in the blogosphere.



Your Template for Creative Blog Marketing

Who Should Blog, and What Should They Say? ... continued

Five Characteristics of a Good Blogger

1. Is passionate.

First and foremost, it is crucial that whoever is chosen to author the blog is passionate about the subject matter. Blogging takes time and energy. While someone might be able to write a few posts about a subject they are not interested in, this would be impossible to do on a regular basis.

Readers can tell when someone feels deeply about what he or she is writing, and they will respond in kind. Boring blogs are not going to be read, so why invest the time and money if you don't plan to do it properly?

Readers want to be engaged. They are eager to feel part of something larger than themselves. They are more likely to return to a blog where the author is enthusiastic about the subject matter. Blogs are not the place to recycle old press releases. Readers expect new information on a regular basis, and they expect it to be provided in an easy-to-read and enjoyable style. GM's FastLane blog is rated among the Top 500 blogs because it is written by people who are as enthusiastic about cars as the readers themselves.

2. Writes in a natural, authentic and human voice.

At the MarketingProfs Thought Leaders Summit, Shel Israel stated, "Bloggers should use their heads and their hearts, and speak in a clear language that makes sense and avoid corporate-speak."

Your Template for Creative Blog Marketing

Who Should Blog, and What Should They Say? ... continued

Since blogs should be conversational, it is critical that the person authoring the blog does not sound like a talking head for the company. Blogging is not a PR venture; it is not the time to tell the world how wonderful your products are, although you can do so in moderation.

Many experts claim that it is a beneficial to write with a specific person in mind. This allows the writer's authentic voice to come through.

3. Has sufficient time to devote to the process.

Running and growing a successful blog is a serious time commitment. Not only must you take the time to research and write multiple posts each week, but you also must approve and reply to comments. Readers will not return to blogs that are not updated frequently. So it is imperative that the blogger understand the amount of time that blogging will take and is willing to make that commitment.

The author must not only post to the company blog, he or she also should monitor the blogosphere for comments about your company and monitor competitor and industry blogs to generate intelligence about future trends.

Business is often fraught with competing deadlines. If something happens that makes it necessary to stop blogging for any length of time, it is a good idea to tell your readers that you will be taking a break and when you plan to return. This prevents them from returning to your blog and being disappointed that there are no new postings.

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Who Should Blog, and What Should They Say? ... continued

4. Has the ability to develop conversations with readers.

Blogging is more than putting an opinion out there for all to read. A good blogger reads the comments left to posts and responds accordingly. This may involve email contact with someone who has left a comment, responding to the comment on the blog or even crafting a new post addressing the comment. As a general rule, half of all time spent associated with blogging should be spent *off* your blog, reading other blogs and leaving comments. This is often overlooked by many companies as it seems counterintuitive, but spending time on your readers' blogs is an excellent way to build community for your own blogging effort.

5. Is willing to stick with the blog once it launches.

Before you start blogging, make sure that you can commit to writing the blog from now on. What starts out sounding like fun can quickly turn into tedium if the blogger is not prepared for the road ahead. At first it might seem as if your efforts aren't being rewarded since you may have few, if any visitors, but it takes time to build a community of engaged readers. Even the most dedicated and successful bloggers took several months, sometimes years, to build a respectable readership.

Communication is about trust. If you want your customers readers to read your blog regularly, they must believe that there will be something new to read. This is another reason why it is imperative to spend time on other blogs because it also helps promote your own blog.

HOW DO I MONITOR THE BLOGOSPHERE

Before starting a business blog, it is important to familiarize yourself with the blogosphere. Read competitors' blogs, industry analysts' blogs and blogs by companies in similar industries.

While reading, pay attention to:

- The subjects raised by bloggers and the readers who leave comments.
- The writing style, which tends to be conversational and free from corporate-speak.
- How conversations flow from one blog to another. Blogs are interrelated and feed off one another. You will be playing with fire, so it is important to understand how quickly word spreads.
- What is written about your company and its products and services.
- How corporate bloggers handle customer complaints and negative comments.

Want to find out what your customers, clients, or competition is saying about you? Monitor the blogosphere.

Your Template for Creative Blog Marketing

How Do I Monitor the Blogosphere? ... continued

There are several tools available. Just as Web sites have search engines, there are search engines specifically designed to locate blogs, rate them and tell you how popular they are. You can even do a search of your company's name to see how often and where it is mentioned.

Popular blog search engines include:

- Technorati (www.technorati.com)
- Google Blog Search (<http://blogsearch.google.com/?ui=blg>)
- IceRocket (www.IceRocket.com)
- BlogPulse (www.blogpulse.com)
- PubSub (www.pubsub.com)

There are others, but these are the most popular.

It's important to read blogs and develop a thorough understanding of the medium. Monitoring the blogosphere allows you to become part of the conversation, even if your company does not have a blog.

Your competitors and customers can monitor what you say in your company's blog because blogs are generally public. Internal blogs that are protected by a firewall do not fall into this category.

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How Do I Monitor the Blogosphere? ... continued

RSS (Really Simple Syndication) allows readers to add your blog to a news feed so that they can quickly scan new post titles and decide if they want to read your blog. It can be a wonderful way to entice readers to your blog. For example, if someone has signed up for a feed on a specific topic and your blog is linked to RSS, he or she may discover your blog and become a frequent reader.



Blogs are powerful because of the massive community in the blogosphere.

YOU DON'T NEED A BLOG TO GET VALUE FROM BLOGGING

Your organization can benefit from blogging even without a blog because you can listen to your customers and engage with them on other blogs. As we've already pointed out, at least some of your customers are talking about your company and its products and services. Comments about your company on a blog are an invitation to join the conversation. It provides an opportunity for your company to fix problems and entice bloggers to try your product again.

Monitoring what is happening in the blogosphere helps a company know when it should contact someone directly. If you read a negative post or comment on a blog, you can respond on the blog using a comment or you can respond to the person directly.



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You Don't need a Blog to Get Value From Blogging ... continued

Bad Things Can Happen if You Don't Monitor the Blogosphere ... Just Ask Kryptonite Locks

Blog swarms are intense negative material posted on blogs that feed off one another's energy, commenting on one another's opinions. They can lead to a death knell if not responded to swiftly. Kryptonite Locks is a case in point.

In 2004, a blogger discovered he could pick a Kryptonite lock with a Bic pen and posted the information, which was quickly picked up by Engadget, a blog that is read daily by more than 250,000 gadget aficionados and techies.



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You Don't need a Blog to Get Value From Blogging ... continued

Engadget's post (www.engadget.com/2004/09/14/kryptonite-evolution-2000-u-lock-hacked-by-a-bic-pen) was picked up by the Associated Press, and the rest, as they say, is history. Over the course of the next 10 months, Kryptonite would exchange 380,000 locks at a cost of well over \$10 million.

What's really frightening is that Kryptonite was aware of what was happening in the blogosphere and chose to ignore it. The company claims that it would do the same again; however, it is paying dearly for that decision.

Imagine what Kryptonite could have accomplished by immediately responding to the first post and then to Engadget's post. If it had simply apologized for the problem and advised the steps it was taking to correct the defect, the situation might have been defused before it made the *New York Times*.

Good Things Can Happen if You Monitor the Blogosphere ... Just Ask iUpload

In 2005, blogger Mark Vernermaass approached iUpload, a company that makes content management and blogging software, seeking information on services, pricing, and other features. When the requested information was not forthcoming, Vernermaass posted information about his experiences in his blog (<http://voiceoflondon.iuplog.com/default.asp?item=99350>).

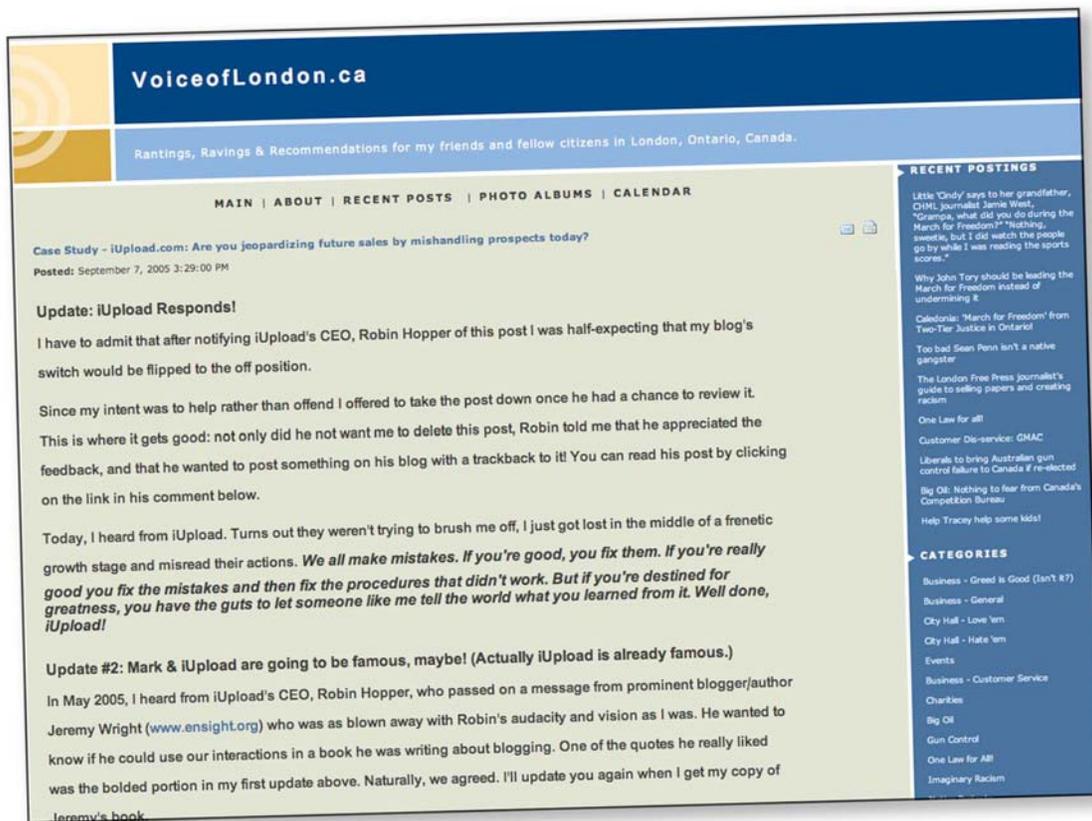
Within days of Vernermaass's post, Robin Hopper, iUpload's CEO, responded. Hopper apologized, explained why things went wrong and promised to make things better. He publicly responded to the question on pricing and promised to take several concrete steps to avoid this type of situation in the future.

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You Don't need a Blog to Get Value From Blogging ... continued

The net result? Vernermass updated his blog post and averted what could have been a publicly embarrassing situation for iUpload.

As you can see, two companies were faced with negative press in the blogosphere. Their differing patterns of response greatly affected the way they the public viewed them.

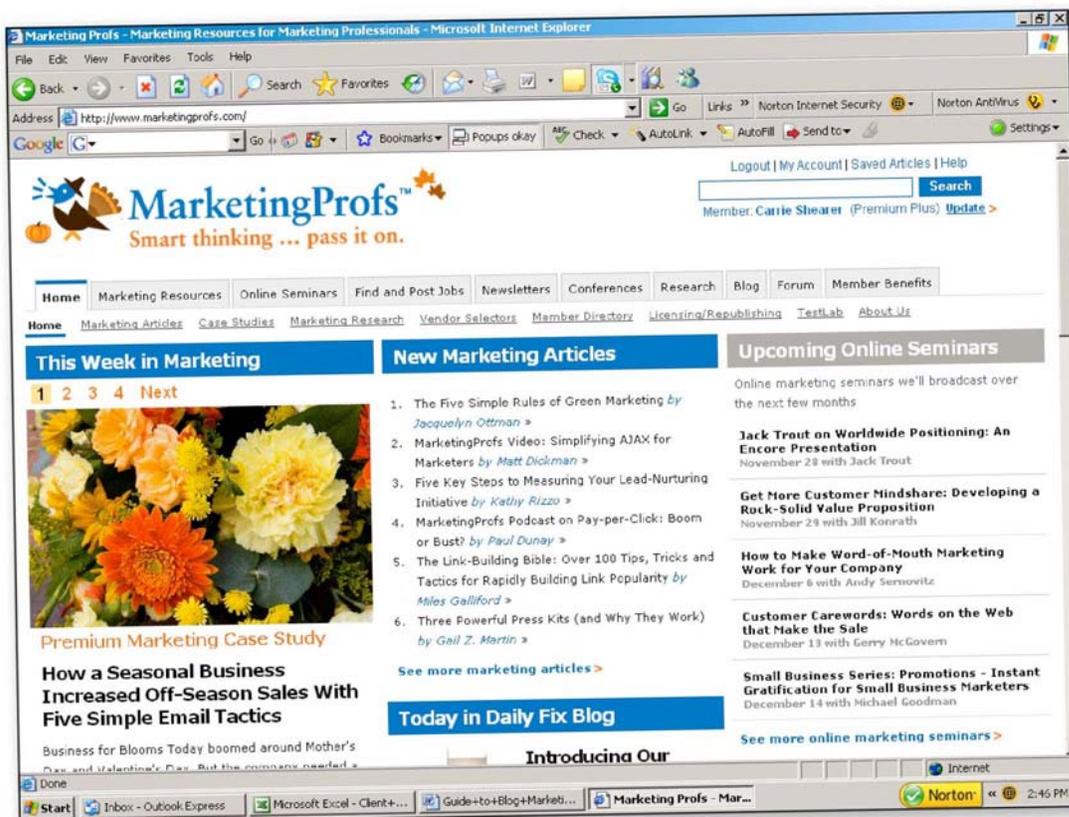


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HOW DO I PROMOTE MY BLOG?

You've done it! After reviewing the blogosphere, deciding upon the strategic goals and finding an authentic voice, your company has launched a blog. How do you let the world know?

Put a link to your company's blog on your home page. You want the link to be clearly visible to anyone who visits your site. As you can see, at MarketingProfs, we list our blog on the top navigation bar where it has prominence.



Your Template for Creative Blog Marketing

How Do I Promote My Blog? ... continued

Here are five simple ways to promote your blog:



1. Add the URL to business cards.
2. Include the URL as part of your email signature if you are the author.
3. List the URL in company advertising.
4. Incorporate the URL in trade show materials.
5. Include the URL in your contact information in presentation materials.

Your Template for Creative Blog Marketing

WHAT DOES A BLOG LOOK LIKE?

Now, let's take a look at a few blogs and understand the elements that are consistent throughout.

There is not a standard blog format, although there are some generally accepted conventions.



Example 1: Rohit Bhargava's *Influential Marketing Blog*

(<http://rohitbhargava.typepad.com/weblog>)

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What Does a Blog Look Like? ... continued

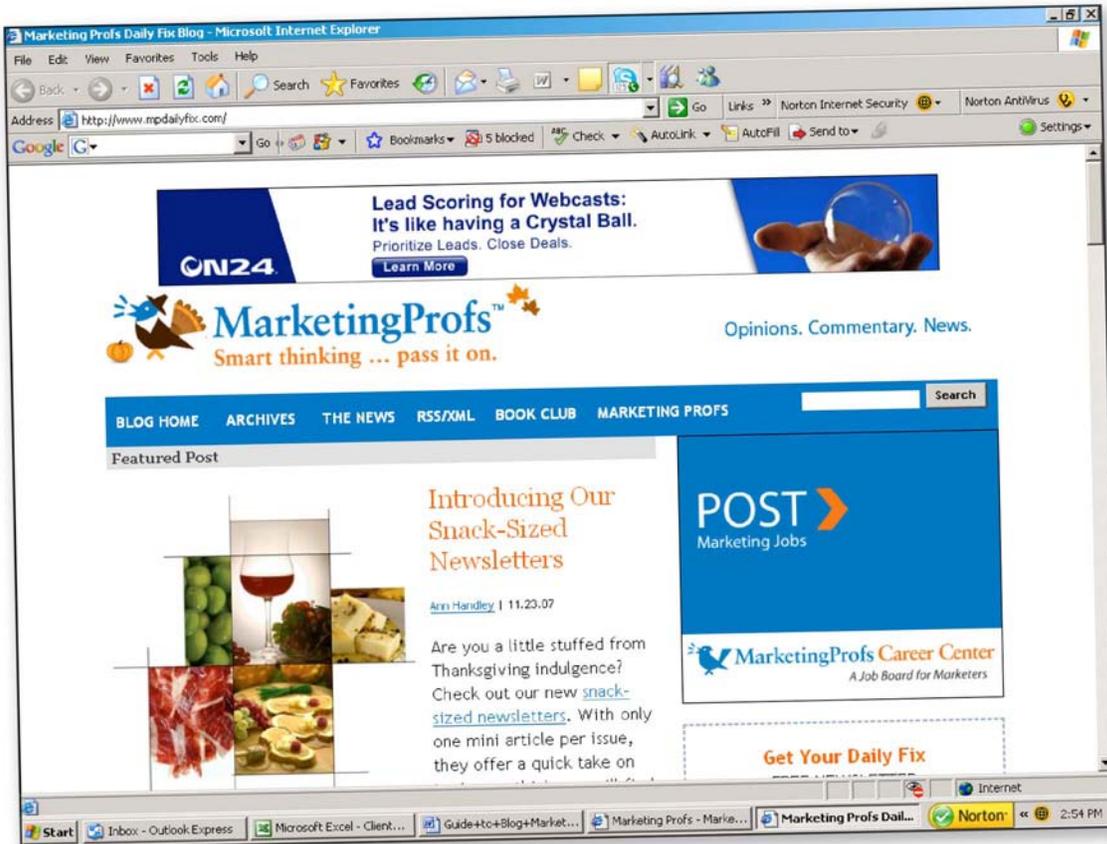


Example 2: *Diva Marketing Blog* (www.bloombergmarketing.blogs.com)

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What Does a Blog Look Like? ... continued



Example 3: *MarketingProfs DailyFix Blog* (www.mpdailyfix.com)

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What Does a Blog Look Like? ... continued

1. Title

Blogs have a descriptive title, which can be the subject matter (e.g., *Influential Marketing Blog* and *Diva Marketing Blog*) or the name of the author, the name of the company or the name of the product (e.g., *MarketingProfs Daily Fix Blog*).

There are no rules; however, unless your name is really well known, it might be wise to choose a name that has something to do with the subject matter of the blog. The goal should be to have a name that entices readers and is easily remembered. If you have to pick between a clever title and one that is easily remembered, go for the latter as you want your readers to be able to find your blog. Remember, the title is what will appear in RSS feeds, so you want it to be one that will garner reader attention.

Many blogs also include a descriptive subtitle or tagline after the title. *Diva Marketing Blog* does this extremely well with the phrase, "An approach to marketing that's fun, bold and savvy ... but always strategically aligned with your brand's objective."

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What Does a Blog Look Like? ... continued

2. Posts

Blog content or articles are called posts. They are date and time-stamped, and appear in reverse chronological order so that the most recent posting is on top. Each post has its own distinct title.

Posts are conversations or conversation starters. As such, they contain fact or personal commentary, or a combination of the two. They are informative, relatively short and to the point. Like email, they are written in the first person. In fact, the best blogs are written as if the author is speaking to a friend.

Posts often contain links to other blogs or Web sites that offer further information about the subject. This demonstrates the power of the blogosphere—interconnection.

3. Comments

Although some do not, the majority of blogs allow readers to leave comments. This feedback differentiates a blog from a Web site. It forms the conversation between the blogger and the readers. Without them, a blog is merely a Web site of posts.

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What Does a Blog Look Like? ... continued

4. Trackbacks

What happens if a blogger reads something in a blog and wants to expand on the subject in his or her own blog? Most blog posts have URLs so that the blogger can put that URL in his or her new post, thereby allowing readers to click and view the original material.

Some blogging software does this automatically. If yours does not, add a comment to the original blog post stating that you have more information on this topic in your blog and include the URL for your blog. If the original blog does not allow comments, email the blogger with the information, and, in most cases, the blogger will add the link to his or her blog.

In essence, trackbacks are comments left on another blog and then linked back to your blog.

5. Permalinks

Permalinks are permanent links (URLs) to a blog post. Since most blogs contain only the most recent posts, permalinks allow you to find blog posts that no longer appear on the blog but are archived. Links are the currency of the blogosphere, and they are what Technorati uses to determine a blog's popularity. They allow connections to a larger conversation.

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What Does a Blog Look Like? ... continued

6. Sidebar

Most blogs contain narrow areas to the right and/or the left of the posts that contain other information. These areas may be used for anything the blogger wants to include. Some bloggers post a photo of themselves. Many bloggers include something about themselves or the blog itself. There may even be a link to a Web site if the blog is separate from the author's Web site. Some blogs use this space for an archive of previous blog posts. Many list their products, books, seminars or other forms of intellectual property.

7. Blogrolls

A blogroll is a list of links to other blogs that the blogger enjoys or reads frequently. If a blog is about a particular subject, readers may be interested in other blogs about the same subject and will look at the blogroll.

8. Archives

Blogs would quickly become unreadable if every post were listed. Therefore, most blogs include only the most recent posts, generally the last 10 or so, and put the remainder in archives. These archives are often prominently displayed in the sidebar.

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What Does a Blog Look Like? ... continued

9. Categories

Since archives are usually date-oriented, they can be somewhat unwieldy to search, especially if the blogger is prolific. By categorizing each post, bloggers make it easier for each post to be located. The blogger chooses the categories based on the subject matter he or she covers. For example, a marketing blog might categorize posts by search marketing, branding, customer retention, etc.

10. Feeds

Most blogs have an orange button labeled XML or RSS that link you to the blog's feeds. Feeds allow readers to subscribe and receive information when the blog is updated and allow recipients to receive blog updates in a spam-free channel that usually bypasses their overburdened email inbox. RSS or XML feeds may be read using a feed reader.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carrie Shearer is a writer and researcher who has been published in the *Wall Street Journal Europe* and other global publications. She is also a published novelist. Before embarking on her second career, Shearer spent 25 years in the international petroleum industry, most of it overseas.



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ABOUT MARKETINGPROFS

Founded in January 2001, MarketingProfs is a publishing company that specializes in providing both strategic and tactical marketing know-how for marketing and business professionals in organizations worldwide through a full range of online media.

With more than 310,000 members and 300 contributors, MarketingProfs provides marketers with practical tools and information in many forms, including articles, online seminars, templates, benchmark survey reports, buyer's guides, a discussion forum and a blog. Updated weekly, MarketingProfs content helps professionals stay current and effective.

APPENDIX

Marketing Profs Articles

Mack Collier

"Eight Easy Ways to Grow Your Blog," July 10, 2007

"Eight Ideas for Revitalizing Your Blog," April 17, 2007

"How to Make the Community Your Marketing Partner," June 13, 2006

"Ten Steps to Starting a Company Blog," November 28, 2006

Bill Comcowich

"How to Create a Successful Blog: 8 Planning Tips," April 4, 2006

"How to Create a Successful Business Blog: 9 Steps to Implementing,"
April 11, 2006

Anil Dash

"Blogging and the Boardroom: Six Steps to Starting a Corporate Blog,"
October 10, 2006

Meryl Evans and Hank Stroll

"Marketing Challenge: When It's Best NOT to Blog," January 17, 2006

David Felfoldi,

"Seven Ways Your Company Can Harness the Power of Blogs,"
August 21, 2007

Ann Handley

"Seven Lessons from a Blogging Year," January 2, 2007

Eric Kintz

"Why Small Businesses Should Care About Web 2.0 Marketing: A
Discussion with the Creator of Duct Tape Marketing," May 9, 2006

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Appendix ... continued

Jonathan Krantz

"Five Surefire Content Ideas (When Your Blog Is Drawing Blanks),"
January 3, 2006

G.A. "Andy" Marken

"Charting the Waters of the Blogosphere," May 29, 2007

Ben McConnell and Jackie Huba

"Seven Reasons Why Businesses Should Blog Now,"
September 28, 2004

TJ McCue

"Blogging Baby Steps: How to Join the Conversation Without
Starting Your Own," July 31, 2007

"Seven Ways to Monitor Blog Conversations," November 13, 2007

B.L. Ochman

"Blogs: A Good (If Scary) Buy for Advertisers," October 26, 2004

"How to Write Compelling Blog Posts," March 21, 2005

"The PR Lessons of a Clueless Pitch," October 7, 2003

"Straight Talk About Blogs: Do You Really Need One?"
September 14, 2004

"Ten Companies That Missed Great Blog Opportunities,"
August 17, 2004

"The Value of Blog Advertising," August 1, 2006

"What Could Your Company Do With a Blog?" June 29, 2004

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Appendix ... continued

Catherine Parker

"The Power of the Industry Blog," October 12, 2004

Barbara Payne

"Blog for Business: Is It Right for Your Company?" October 14, 2003

Susan Solomon

"Attention, CEOs: It's Time to Blog," February 1, 2005

"Don't Bore Me with Your Blog," July 12, 2005

"Whose Blog Is It Anyway?" April 19, 2005

Stephan Spencer

"A Business Case for Blogging: Thought Leaders on Blog Marketing (Part 1)," May 17, 2005

"A Business Case for Blogging: Thought Leaders on Blog Marketing (Part 2)," May 24, 2005

"Ten Tips to Help Your Blog Soar in the Search Engines (Part 1 of 2)," May 29, 2006

"Ten Tips to Help Your Blog Soar in the Search Engines (Part 2 of 2)," May 9, 2006

Michael A. Stelzner

"The Dark Side of Blogging: Warnings from Leading Bloggers," May 1, 2007

Matthew Syrett

"Exploring Blogs for Brand Insights," April 26, 2005



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Your Template for Creative Blog Marketing

Appendix ... continued

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