



Working the Web

Ellie Becker and Bernadette Nelson | May 2011

How to get a blog going...and why you should.

Have you started your company's blog yet? If yes, congratulations and read on for updates on the value of your efforts. If no, let us try to convince you further why blogging is one of the best marketing investments you can make. We'll even help you decide whether to go with a templated blogging platform or a custom blog.

Here's why blogs are so important: They provide the dynamic content to your website that search engines love, as well as opportunities for community building and interaction with customers and prospects. They also facilitate information sharing on social media and build backlinks to your website, a key factor in higher search engine rankings.

Blogs also communicate your expertise and industry knowledge. Content is generally non-commercial, helpful information, shared in a more personal and authentic voice than traditional marketing. Posts can take many forms including prose, video, audio, graphic charts – whichever you prefer.

Convincing Stats

Hubspot, the inbound marketing software company, recently compiled impressive statistics (their own and from other credible sources) about what it termed 'transformational marketing' – including blogging. Here are highlights:

- U.S. Internet users spend three times more minutes on blogs and social networks than on email. (Nielsen Company)
- Companies that blog get 55% more website visitors. (Hubspot)
- Two-thirds of marketers say their company blog is 'critical' or 'important' to their business. (Hubspot)
- The average budget for company blogs and social media has nearly doubled in two years. (Hubspot)

To help you start blogging, we're going to discuss WordPress.com – for hosted templated blogs – and WordPress.org - for downloadable software you can customize. Both options are based on the same software and allow you to add posts on your own. (Note: Google's blogging platform Blogger offers templates that can be somewhat customized. Search on 'WordPress vs Blogger 2011' to find comparison charts.)

WordPress.com

With WordPress.com, basic hosting is free and there are upgrades at modest cost for uploading audio and video files and for domain mapping – so that your url reads www.myblog.com rather than www.myblog.wordpress.com. You can choose from about 100 themes that can be modified only slightly. WordPress.com provides a limited number of plug-ins and widgets to add functionality, plus automatic backups and site statistics.

WordPress.org

If you've invested in brand identity and a custom website, the software from WordPress.org allows you to match your blog to the rest of your site and customize it further with a wide array of plug-ins for SEO, subscriptions and other functionalities. You'll need to host the blog on a compatible server – either your own or an approved hosting service at a small monthly cost. Most companies will need the help of a web designer to create a custom WordPress blog.

Regardless of how you develop your blog, with consistency you'll build a community of interested followers who are more likely to become customers and/or brand advocates. Blogging is a positive step in transforming your marketing.

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