

November 5, 2004

Blogging: Bubble Or Big Deal?

by Charlene Li

BEST PRACTICES

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Client Choice topic and includes Consumer Technographics® data



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Blogging: Bubble Or Big Deal?

When And How Businesses Should Use Blogs

by **Charlene Li**

with Josh Bernoff and Tenley McHarg

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Although Weblogs (blogs) are currently used by only a small number of online consumers, they've garnered a great deal of corporate attention because their readers and writers are highly influential. Forrester believes that blogging will grow in importance, and at a minimum, companies should monitor blogs to learn what is being said about their products and services. Companies that plan to create their own public blogs should already feel comfortable having a close, two-way relationship with users. In this document we recommend best practices, including a blogging code of ethics, and metrics that will show the impact of blogs on business goals.

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NOTES & RESOURCES

Forrester interviewed vendor and user companies including Disney, Intelliseek, Microsoft, Pheedo, and Six Apart.

Related Research Documents

- "DNC Bloggers Missed An Opportunity"
August 4, 2004, Quick Take
- "Marketers: Wake Up To Emotive Network Users"
June 24, 2004, Trends
- "Blogging: Not Even Close To Mainstream"
August 20, 2003, Brief
- "Emotive Networks Connect Consumers"
September 24, 2002, Report

RESEARCH CATALYST

Clients selected this topic for Client Choice research.

INTRODUCTION TO WEBLOGS

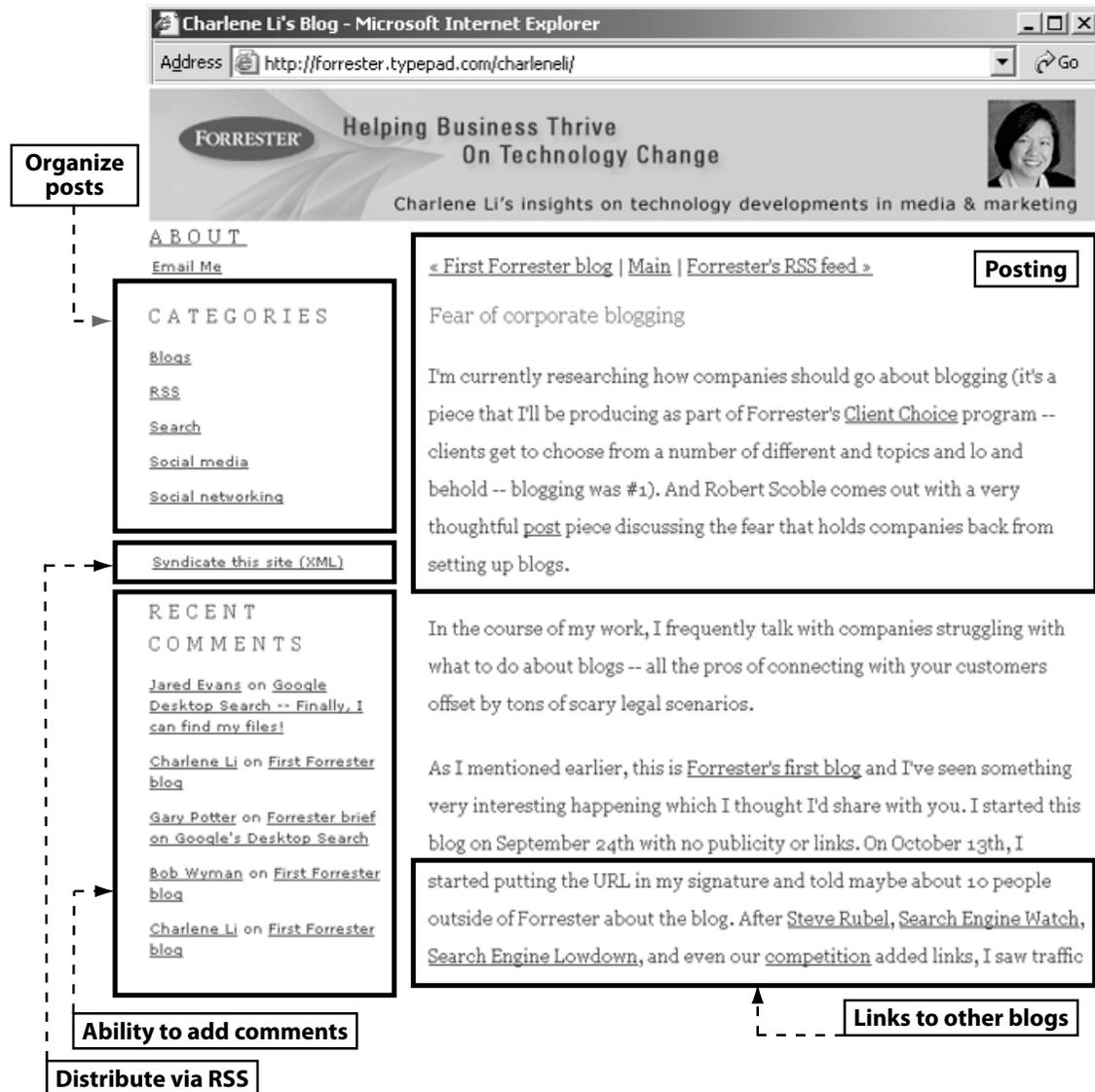
Although Weblogs (also known as blogs) have been around for several years, they entered the common mainstream this summer during the political conventions.¹ Our clients have a variety of reactions to blogs — from curious to afraid. In this document we'll explain what blogs are, who uses them, and whether your company should have one.

Weblogs 101

Blogs are a simple way for people to create a journal of their thoughts or ideas in a format in which any Web user can see them. Although many consumers use blogs as diaries, companies also use them to provide internal teams with frequent project updates, or to deliver product support information to customers. In contrast with ordinary Web tools that aren't designed for frequent updates, blogs make it easy to create new material on a daily or hourly basis. Blog tools can:

- **Add content chronologically.** The main components of a blog are posts, bits of commentary that are arranged chronologically, with the most recent at the top (see Figure 1). Most blogging services and software like Blogger and Movable Type employ easy-to-use Web-based forms. But bloggers — those who create blogs — can also submit posts via email and can even post photos from their camera phones.²
- **Manage links to and from other sites.** Blogs often contain links that reference other blogs, Web sites, and files — which is why news spreads so quickly across blogs. Many services also offer “trackback,” a feature that shows when other sites link to a specific post. The benefit: Frequent linking in and out of posts means that the posts can be found more readily and can be ranked more highly by search engines like Google.
- **Syndicate and distribute the content.** Most blogs come feed-enabled, which makes it easy to distribute blog postings in RSS, a simple content syndication mechanism.³ As a result, blog readers don't need to make a special trip to a Web site to read the blog — instead, they can scan headlines that are pushed to feed aggregators like NewsGator, Bloglines, or My Yahoo!.

Figure 1 Elements Of A Blog



Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

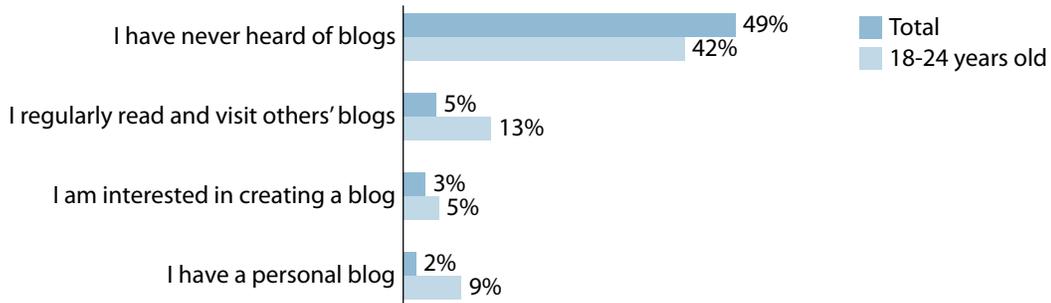
Blogging Activity Remains Low — But Reaches Influential, Young Users

Blog use has grown significantly in the past year — online consumers who regularly read blogs increased from 2% in 2003 to 5% in 2004.⁴ Even today, half of all online consumers have never heard of blogging (see Figure 2-1). But despite the low usage, Forrester believes that consumers who use blogs will become an attractive target group for marketers because:

- **Young adults read blogs three times more frequently than older adults.** Not only are young adults more likely to read blogs, but they are also nine times as likely to have their own personal blog. Young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 make up 25% of all adult bloggers but only 9% of the general adult online population. As they age, these young adults will bring their blogging habits with them into the mainstream.
- **Blog user demographics make them an attractive target.** Blog users — online consumers who read and/or write blogs — are more likely to be male, affluent, and broadband-connected (see Figure 2-2). And blog users have these attractive demographics despite being significantly younger than non-bloggers.
- **Blog users consider themselves to be opinion leaders.** Compared with all online consumers, blog users are much more likely to view themselves as leaders (see Figure 2-3). Interestingly, consumers who write personal blogs are not more likely than regular blog readers to believe this.

Figure 2 Blog Users Represent A Small But Influential Target

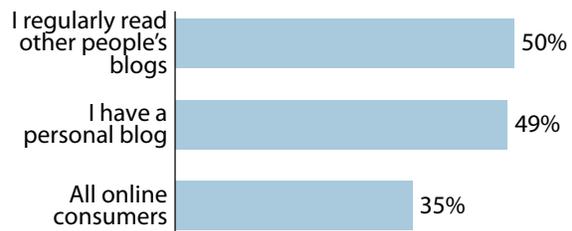
2-1 "Please indicate which of the following statements about blogs applies to you."



2-2 Profile of blog users

	Blog users	Non-blog users
Male	57%	48%
Mean age	37.7	44.1
Mean online tenure (years)	5.6	5.0
Have broadband access	64%	51%
Average household income	\$57,900	\$55,600

2-3 Percent of each type of blog user that agrees with the statement, "I am a natural leader — people always listen to my opinion."



Base: US online consumers

Source: Forrester's Consumer Technographics® August 2004 North American Devices, Media, And Marketing Online Study

Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

CORPORATE USE OF BLOGS SHOULD VARY BASED ON BUSINESS GOALS

Blogs are starting to become a business phenomenon as well, with company-sanctioned blogs being written by executives, venture capitalists, and product managers.⁵ Forrester recommends that companies develop blogging plans in four strategic areas: 1) monitoring blogs; 2) letting employees blog on their own; 3) supporting internal blogs; and 4) creating external, public blogs. Not all companies should pursue all four strategies — what follows below are not only best practices in each area but are also a guide on when companies should use each strategy.

Monitor Blogs For Impact On The Brand

One key difference between blogs and other types of consumer-generated media — such as discussion boards and forums — is the interconnected nature of blogs. As a result, blogs often reference each other — and both good and bad news travel quickly in the “blogosphere.”⁶ All companies should monitor what’s said on blogs with these steps:

- **Find and track mentions automatically with RSS feeds.** At a minimum, companies should track what is being said about them on blogs. Using blog search engines like Bloglines, Feedster, and PubSub, companies can find blogs that discuss topics of interest.⁷ These search engines also allow you to set up custom feeds to monitor every blog posting that contains a keyword like your company’s brand — and will deliver those postings through a feed to your desktop.
- **Monitor blogs with agency services — if you can afford it.** Ideally, blogs should be monitored alongside traditional media like press articles. Intelliseek’s BlogPulse service tracks not only the frequency and tenor of blog postings, but also their total impact against traditional media. The company’s BrandPulse then integrates blog mentions with other types of consumer-generated media like discussion groups. This type of service is ideal for companies that already monitor brand impact.
- **Comment on others’ blogs.** Rather than just lurk as readers, companies can make their first forays into blogs by providing comments to posts on others’ blogs. For example, if a concern is aired about your product, respond to the post with a suggestion on how to solve the problem.⁸ Assign someone you trust, such as a product manager or someone from corporate affairs, to handle this first entrée into blogs. Companies should provide training and clear guidelines on what can and should be said on the external blogs, and should start with just a few comments to gauge reaction.

Allow Employees' Personal Blogs, But Provide Formal Guidelines

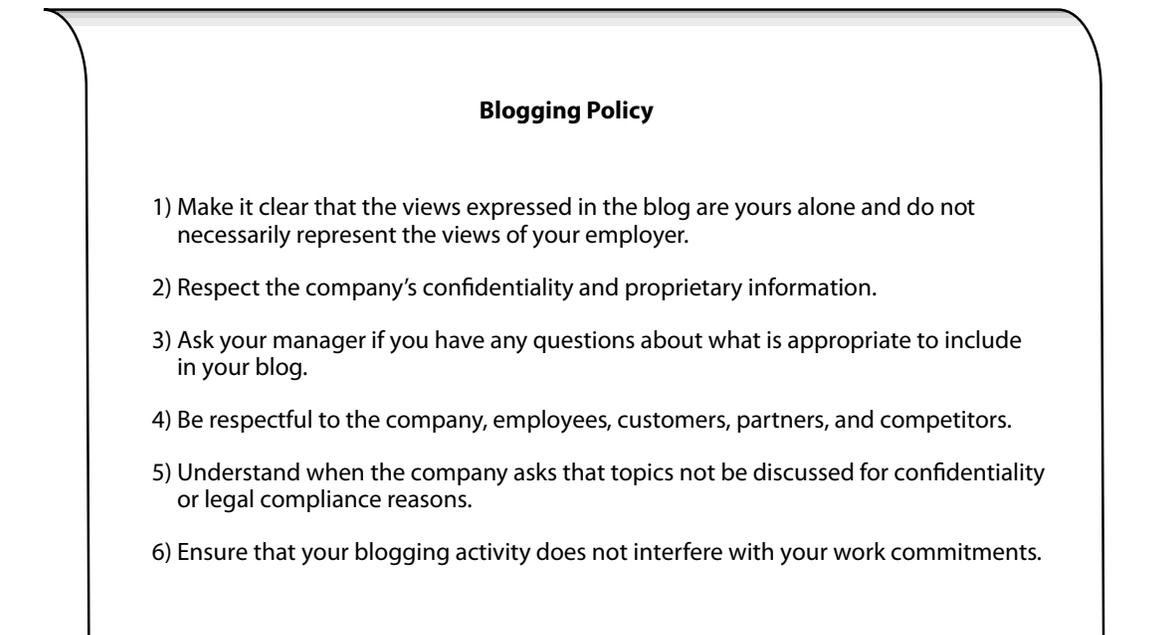
It's inevitable — your employees will blog, with or without your permission. Although you could clamp down and forbid personal blogs outright, you probably can't stop them — employees will likely start and post the same comments in an anonymous blog. We recommend that, rather than prohibit blogging, companies provide personal blogging guidelines for employees, similar to policies that outline the proper use of corporate email, with disciplinary action or dismissal as the ultimate sanction (see Figure 3). In writing a corporate blogging policy, companies should include two crucial elements:

- **Establish which rules are inviolable.** Respecting existing confidentiality agreements and company secrets is a no-brainer — and not doing so should clearly be grounds for firing. Sun Microsystem's blogging policy states simply, "Don't tell secrets," and asks employees to use common sense — and to check with managers when they are unsure.⁹
- **Set expectations on when the company will intervene.** There are certain times when the company may feel that it needs to reinforce what can and cannot be discussed in personal blogs — for example, during quiet periods before an IPO or earnings announcements. The company may also limit an employee's blogging activity during work hours, either for legal or productivity reasons. Groove Networks has a clause in its blogging policy that notifies employees that the company may "request" that certain topics not be discussed for compliance reasons — this gives Groove plenty of leeway to get involved if necessary.¹⁰ When possible, managers should review personal blogs and point out instances where employees are skirting the line.

Use Internal Blogs To Support Collaboration And Communication

A natural place for companies to start supporting blogs is within the enterprise, especially if information must be shared among employees working in different locations or during different shifts. Departments that have information-intensive projects — such as IT or product development — are also ideal candidates for internal blog use. Blogs provide institutional, searchable knowledge management with the added benefit that everyone can easily participate. Internal blogs should be used to:

- **Capture information for sharing.** The operations and engineering team at the Disney ABC Cable Networks Group used blogs to log help desk inquiries during its round-the-clock shifts, replacing an email-based system. Not only did shifts know that a bug had been resolved, but they were also able to search the blogs to see if a solution had been used before. Moreover, Disney installed a feed reader — NewsGator — that was integrated into Outlook so that the information could be pushed to people, rather than requiring them to come to a site to read the updates.

Figure 3 Sample Corporate Blogging Policy

Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

The result: Not only did email flow die down, but less energy went into political finger-pointing because transparent blogs meant that there was no way to hide mistakes.

- **Facilitate collaboration.** Individual team members can be given a blog on which they can give progress updates. That way, rather than having to constantly check to see where colleagues are, team members can simply check their blogs. IT departments have often used a related technology called “wikis,” which allow users to modify a Web-based document — revisions can be tracked, as well. Tickle, a media company that provides assessment tests, recently underwent a search engine optimization process and the manager used wikis to update four different departments on specific keyword strategies and site changes. Used together, blogs and wikis can become a powerful, easy-to-use combination.¹¹

Connect With Customers Through Public Blogs

The biggest reason why most companies shy away from having an external, public blog is the fear of legal repercussions — the nightmare scenario is a lawsuit arising out of poor advice gleaned from a blog. But Forrester believes that public blogs are already beneficial in establishing a connection with customers — and in the next five years, they will become a key component of corporate communication strategies. Here's why:

- **Consumers expect personal connections.** Thanks to technologies like email, instant messaging, and now blogs, consumers form what Forrester calls “Emotive Networks,” where they engage in mutual communication and support.¹² These consumers have conversations about the companies they work for or do business with. Companies that want to join these conversations will be more successful if they can connect at an emotional, personal level.¹³ Jonathan Schwartz, president of Sun Microsystems, maintains a blog where he shares his thoughts about the business with more than 100,000 visitors each month.¹⁴
- **Companies that present a human face have an advantage.** The thought of having a public company blog instills fear in traditional command-and-control corporate cultures. But giving customers a view of the inner workings of a company has its tangible rewards. Consider the Microsoft Developer Network’s Channel 9 blog, which shows video clips of Microsoft engineers talking about their current projects and invites developers to add their comments.¹⁵ Microsoft had always considered itself to be open to developers but wasn’t perceived as such because access was so limited. Channel 9 not only gives Microsoft a way to be more responsive, but it has also helped revamp the corporate image over the past year.¹⁶
- **Search engines will favor blog postings.** Search engines naturally push blog postings to the top of search results because the blogs are 1) heavily linked to one another, and 2) made up of individual posts that can each be indexed as separate files by search engines. The result: Companies have already started strategically using blogs for search placement. For example, executives at Pheedo actively posted and promoted their blog on RSS advertising and as a result, the blog appeared at the top of Google search results for the keywords “RSS advertising.”

BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING PUBLIC BLOGS

Blogs aren’t for everybody. But unlike other ideas that got puffed up during the Internet bubble, they can be a big deal — in terms of improving communication with your customers. Should you do one? Here’s a simple test:

- **Does your company routinely have conversations with customers?** Most companies believe that they need to “message to” their customers — as opposed to having a conversation with them. Blogs can be a natural, easy extension of an existing relationship — or a forced march into openness that will come across as insincere. Monster gave its team of career advisors, who usually write career how-to articles, an external team blog where they discuss everything from Monster’s paid time-off policies to how the pennant-winning Red Sox affected workplace productivity.¹⁷ The blog

has relevance because its authors, who are already writers, regularly field and answer Monster user questions.

- **How much control does your company need to exert over communications?** In some companies, legal or regulatory requirements mean that nothing ever gets released to the public without extensive legal review. Blogs can't create customer dialog if the company isn't comfortable having those conversations in the first place. There may be some areas, such as product development or recruitment, that may be better starting places for external blogs. But if your company must currently clear any communication with customers through a maze of legal and marketing reviews, then public blogs may be a long way off.
- **Does your company have something important and unique to share?** A company could simply repurpose press releases on its blog — and nobody would ever read them. Instead, consider what information you could provide that would connect with customers, such as sharing ideas for new product design and asking for feedback or addressing a customer question in a different way. Stonyfield Farm has blogs that focus on women's issues and the environment — two causes that the company supports and that it believes differentiates its product from other yogurts on the grocery shelf.
- **Is your company ready to listen — and act?** Having a blog also means that you're willing to listen — especially if you allow readers to post comments. Even if you don't enable comments from visitors, acknowledging customer ideas and concerns demonstrates that you are listening and are taking action. Clip-n-Seal makes a device that can quickly close plastic bags, and routinely posts on its site "unexpected uses," such as protecting diving knives from rusting in salty water.¹⁸

If Blogging Is Right For You, Here's How To Do It

If you decide that having a public blog serves the interests of your company, keep the following best practices in mind:

- **Determine the role of blogs in your communications ecosystem.** Many companies make the mistake of thinking of their blogs as a unique entity, instead of a part of a complex ecosystem that customers, employees, and executives use to communicate with each other. For example, although discussion boards give customers a place to discuss upcoming product improvements, a blog by definition has an author who takes responsibility for owning the conversation. Companies should look at their existing arsenals of communication tools and determine how blogs can fit in.

- **Be transparent and build trust with your readers.** A common way of thinking about blogs is that they should be like reading letters from someone; readers will come to understand the author's interests and values. To that end, the voice and tenor of the blog should reflect the writer's personality, not the interests of the company. A good first step is to establish a code of ethics for your company blogs that is similar to those used by professional journalists (see Figure 4).¹⁹ In addition, beware of using posts prepared by the PR team. To build trust, blogs need to be written with an authentic voice. Dr. Pepper/Seven Up shot itself in the foot when its blogs promoting its Raging Cow drink were exposed as fakes.²⁰

Figure 4 A Blogger's Code Of Ethics

Code of Ethics

- 1) I will tell the truth.
- 2) I will write deliberately and with accuracy.
- 3) I will acknowledge and correct mistakes promptly.
- 4) I will preserve the original post, using notations to show where I have made changes so as to maintain the integrity of my publishing.
- 5) I will never delete a post.
- 6) I will not delete comments unless they are spam or off-topic.
- 7) I will reply to emails and comments when appropriate and will do so promptly.
- 8) I will strive for high quality with every post — including basic spell-checking.
- 9) I will stay on topic.
- 10) I will disagree with other opinions respectfully.
- 11) I will link to online references and original source materials directly.
- 12) I will disclose conflicts of interest.
- 13) I will keep private issues and topics private because discussing private issues would jeopardize my personal and work relationships.

Source: Forrester Research, Inc.

- **Encourage and respond to comments from visitors.** Many blogs give readers the ability to comment on a specific posting. Bloggers in turn frequently review the comments and write comments themselves, thus encouraging further engagement. One major concern about the use of comments, especially by publicly traded firms, stems from compliance with Sarbanes-Oxley rules. Rather than allowing comments, such blogs should only allow trackbacks that link directly to a post hosted by another blog.²¹
- **Manage bad news quickly and truthfully.** When bad news hits — and it eventually will — don't run for cover; link to the bad news and address it head on. You'll gain credibility and loyalty for dealing with the problem immediately. But be prepared: Have a plan that you can activate quickly to involve all interested parties, ranging from the CEO to corporate affairs.
- **Syndicate and market the blog.** Many blogs use RSS to distribute content through news aggregators. Including the full text of the post in the feed is courteous to your users, but the company may have business reasons — such as driving advertising dollars or monitoring traffic levels — that require sending only an excerpt.²² In addition, consider how you will market the blog. Where will it appear on your Web site, in email signatures, and in your marketing materials? For example, VH1's "Best Week Ever" promotes its blog routinely during its half-hour broadcast, asking viewers to visit the site and tell the producers (who really do write the posts) what they would like to see on the show.²³
- **Measure what matters.** Blog-specific metrics like traffic levels and unique users are essential, but companies should also track incoming links as a measure of the blog's influence. Tying the impact of blogs to concrete business goals can go a long way toward justifying the additional risk and exposure that blogs represent. Some examples include comparing blog-reading customers versus nonreaders in customer satisfaction surveys, monitoring the volume of transactions that originate from blog postings, and measuring the reduction of customer service inquiries. Finally, companies should take into account metrics like goodwill, loyalty, and brand equity, which although difficult to measure quantitatively, will be evidenced through anecdotes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

START SLOW BUT START NOW

Can a company survive without blogging? Sure, in much the same way a company can make do without a Web site. You won't go out of business, but your competitors will have the advantage of a new tool to connect with your customers. Forrester advises companies to pay attention to blogs and when they feel they are ready to start, to take the following steps:

- **Start small.** To get comfortable with this new medium, companies should start with an internal blog in a small workgroup. The same applies with external blogs — select a product team that's already communicating regularly with its customers to pilot your first efforts. One idea: Address frequently asked questions in a blog format. Functional areas like recruitment are also a good, noncontroversial place to start. For example, a recruiter at Microsoft maintains a blog where she discusses topics like what the company looks for when hiring an inbound product manager.²⁴
- **Establish guidelines on who can have an officially sanctioned company blog.** The selection criteria for a corporate blogger range from general writing ability to proximity to real customer interactions. Start with just a few trusted individuals, and in addition to providing clear blogging guidelines, make clear why these "testers" were selected.
- **Launch with a dozen already-published postings and post frequently.** When the blog becomes public, readers will want a bevy of rich content to peruse — the goal is to have them come back or, better yet, add the blog to their news aggregator. Follow this up with frequent posts to drive readership. Many blogging services allow you to author posts in advance and schedule them for future publication.

WHAT IT MEANS

BLOGS WILL EVOLVE JUST AS WEB SITES HAVE

The current blogging market in many ways resembles the mid '90s when corporate Web sites were just starting to appear. Standards were unclear, metrics didn't exist, and companies were concerned about what information they should put online. As more corporate blogs appear, the application and readership of blogs will change.

- **Blogs will become marketing vehicles.** Nike recently launched an "adverblog" in conjunction with Gawker Media, while Lee Dungarees' "90 Ft. Babe" blog chronicles the adventures of a clearly fictional giantess looking for a date. Advertising agencies like Starcom MediaVest will use these adverblogs in much the same way that

they use microsites — drawing in a targeted audience but in a way such that the interaction is based on comments from the community, rather than Flash animations.

- **Blog use will increase, thanks to RSS and My Yahoo!**. The beauty of RSS is that it makes it actually feasible to follow and read hundreds of blogs. Yahoo!'s integration of RSS feeds means that adding a blog to your My Yahoo! page can be as easy as clicking on a button.²⁵ Also, as users come across a posting in Yahoo! search results, they can also add the blog to their content pages with just a click.
- **Blogs will build strong, efficient teams.** Forrester envisions a day when new employees on their first day will be handed a sheet of paper with their phone number, email address — and a URL for their blog. The company would give all of its employees a personal internal blog where they could provide project updates, trip reports, and market intelligence — anything that they think others should know about the work that they are doing. This information could then be tied into the company's VoIP phone system — for internal calls, the caller's photo, title, bio, and a link to his blog would appear on the computer screen. The blog content would give context and background for the call, making it unnecessary to send extra emails or to have extensive discussions about a project.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

Online Resource

More information and updates about corporate blogging can be found on Charlene Li's blog at <http://forrester.typepad.com/charleneli>.

Companies Interviewed For This Document

Bloglines	Pheedo
CooperKatz	PubSub
Disney	Six Apart
Feedster	Socialtext
Intelliseek	Technorati
Jotspot	Tickle
Microsoft	Yahoo!
NewsGator	

ENDNOTES

- ¹ The Democratic and Republican political conventions gave press credentials to bloggers and sparked consumer and press interest in how blogs are being used. See the August 4, 2004, Quick Take "DNC Bloggers Missed An Opportunity."
- ² Services like Flickr allow users to send photos from their camera phones and automatically load them into their blogs. The implication is that everything from celebrity sightings to accident reports can be quickly published online.
- ³ RSS, which stands for "really simple syndication" or "rich site summary," is an XML standard content owners use to distribute content. For example, Forrester has an RSS feed that showcases recently published research at <http://www.forrester.com/find/browse/rss>. Users can use a content aggregator, such as the one built into the new My Yahoo! Page, or software like NewsGator and FeedDemon to collect and read their feeds.
- ⁴ When Forrester first looked at blog use last year, only 2% of online consumers visited a blog site at least once a week, and 79% had never heard of a blog. See the August 20, 2003, Brief "Blogging: Not Even Close To Mainstream."
- ⁵ Richard Edelman, president and CEO of Edelman, a public relations firm, has a blog at www.edelman.com/speak_up/blog/. Venture capitalist Stephen Jurvetson from Draper Fisher Jurvetson has a blog at <http://jurvetson.blogspot.com/>, but most recent postings also appear next to his biography on the firm's site at www.dfj.com/steve/. And Maytag has a product support blog for its personal beverage vending machine, SkyBox by Maytag, at www.ka-thunk.com. In addition to

providing sports-related content to “man cave” enthusiasts, a product manager dispenses advice and answers questions about the product.

- ⁶ In 2002, William Quick coined the term “blogosphere” to describe “the intellectual cyberspace we bloggers occupy.” The original reference appears at www.iw3p.com/DailyPundit/2001_12_30_dailypundit_archive.php#8315120.
- ⁷ For example, PubSub monitors top blogs and conducts an ongoing search for that particular term.
- ⁸ Although there are legal concerns about providing advice, in many cases comments can be made about problems where an answer already exists. For example, if someone asks about how a product is supposed to work in sub-zero temperatures, a representative can reply back with a link to two or three pages on the Web site that address the question.
- ⁹ Sun Microsystems’ corporate blogging policy is available at www.tbray.org/ongoing/When/200x/2004/05/02/Policy.
- ¹⁰ Groove Network’s blogging policy can be found at www.ozzie.net/blog/2002/08/24.html.
- ¹¹ A wiki (pronounced “weekee”) is a Web page that allows any authorized user to change its content. Tickle uses Confluence, a product from Atlassian. Other enterprise wiki providers include Jotspot and Socialtext. One of the most famous public wikis is the Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia that anyone can change. You can find it at www.wikipedia.com.
- ¹² Consumers are connecting with each other on their own through email and instant messaging. Forrester calls these emerging consumer connections Emotive Networks, which are defined as interconnected groups of consumers engaged in communication and support. See the September 24, 2002, Forrester Report, “Emotive Networks Connect Consumers.”
- ¹³ No sane consumer wants to be “messed to” — what they want is engagement with companies on a personal level. If another company provides an engaging experience via its blog, it will garner a loyal relationship that will be difficult to displace. A seminal book on the idea that markets are conversations is the “The Cluetrain Manifesto,” Perseus Books, 1999.
- ¹⁴ In *Business 2.0*, Jonathan Schwartz commented, “It (blogging) is an efficient way for me to have a focused, one-on-one conversation with thousands of people.” Thomas Mucha, “Have Blog, Will Market,” *Business 2.0*, September 30, 2004. See www.business2.com/b2/web/articles/0,17863,703479,00.html.
- ¹⁵ Microsoft’s Channel 9 site is available at <http://channel9.msdn.com>.
- ¹⁶ An article on B2BOnline.com that explains the power of public blogs to market companies including Microsoft is available at www.btobonline.com/article.cms?articleId=22119. Sean Callahan, “Marketers Join The Blogging Dialogue,” *BtoB*, October 11, 2004.
- ¹⁷ The Monster Blog is available at <http://monster.typepad.com>.
- ¹⁸ The Clip-n-Seal blog can be found at <http://clip-n-seal.com/news/>.

- ¹⁹ John Hiller has an excellent piece on how blogging is — and isn't — similar to journalism at www.microcontentnews.com/articles/bloggingjournalism.htm. The code of ethics from the Society Of Professional Journalists is available at www.spj.org/ethics_code.asp. And Robert Scoble — best known for having a personal blog independent of his employer, Microsoft — laid out a “corporate blogging manifesto” that included ideals like, “Tell the truth,” and, “Never hide information.” This manifesto is available at <http://radio.weblogs.com/0001011/2003/02/26.html>.
- ²⁰ Dr. Pepper/Seven Up invited young bloggers to be briefed about Raging Cow, a new flavored milk product, and then blog about it. The problem: The bloggers were asked not to mention that they were briefed and were asked to write as if they were personally excited about the product.
- ²¹ Using trackbacks is increasing, as it requires commenters to write directly on their blogs what they think about the original post. The result: higher quality that stems from publishing responsibility.
- ²² When creating an RSS feed, bloggers have an option to send an excerpt or the entire post. It's usually more convenient to send the entire post, as the user can then read it completely without having to link to the Web site — and can also read it offline. But excerpts are used frequently by publishers like nytimes.com and wsj.com because they want to drive users back to their sites to view ads.
- ²³ The “Best Week Ever” blog is available at <http://bestweekever.vh1.com/>.
- ²⁴ Heather Leigh, a recruiter at Microsoft, maintains a blog at <http://blogs.msdn.com/heatherleigh>.
- ²⁵ The new My Yahoo! page allows users to find and add any content that is syndicated through an RSS feed. Previously, only content that had a syndication agreement with Yahoo! could be added — now anyone who distributes through RSS can be seen on My Yahoo!. See the October 7, 2004, Quick Take “Yahoo! Unveils Personalized Search.”

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