

The Blog: Understanding it and using it in PR

By: Roberta Perry

The blogosphere is confusing and there is tons of information available about it. So let's start with a definition: a weblog, or blog is a shared online journal, where the writer posts regularly updated entries about personal experiences, hobbies, web links or whatever is on their mind (usually in reverse chronological order).

Recent studies estimate that 12 million US adults are blogging and 57 million are reading them. Anyone with internet access can create and maintain a blog, so types, quality and subjects vary greatly. One thing for sure is that blogs are enormously useful tools in getting your message out.

As a communications tool, blogs allow you to have conversations with millions of people who are looking for your type of product or service. It gives you a chance to write with authority as a "pioneer" in your industry and maintain contact with your customers. It is also a great tool for research. You can find out what people are saying about you, your products and services, your competitors and your industry.

So how do you get started? It's not difficult, but I suggest you investigate other blogs first to see what's already out there. If you are going to start blogging, I advocate you routinely set aside time every 2 or 3 days to post an entry. There is nothing like stale content that can sink a great effort. To find and research blogs, check out <http://www.technorati.com>, <http://blogsearch.google.com>, <http://www.icerocket.com>, or <http://www.egosurf.org>.

To create your blog, places like <http://www.blogger.com/start> and <http://www.sixapart.com/typepad> are good places to begin. Blogging is a commitment of time, content and practice. As with anything, you get better with practice, so don't be discouraged if you don't think your first post is up to snuff.

Here are a few links that give great tips and advice on blogging and other types of social media.
<http://www.prologger.net/habits-of-highly-effective-bloggers-reader-submissions/>
<http://www.shiftcomm.com/downloads/pr2essentials.pdf>
<http://hyku.com/blog/archives/001033.html>
<http://www.toprankblog.com/2006/06/25-tips-for-marketing-your-blog/>

My last piece of advice is to create a top ten list of all your favorite blogs, whether they are about your industry, a hobby or about a

favorite vacation spot. Read them often and if the owners allow comments, start writing so you get familiar with how it works. Then ask yourself why you like the blog: is it the content, the tone and writing style or something else? This will help you create a style that's all your own.

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