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5 Ways Blogging Can Help Your Business

By Jeff Wuorio (Excerpts Taken)

"Blog" is simply an abbreviated way to say "Web log." It's a journal posted on a Web site, updated on a regular basis and containing news, opinions, ideas and brainstorming, plus links to other sources of information, other Web sites and other blogs.

Many blogs cut both ways, inviting readers to post feedback on what they see. While that can apply to everything from sports and entertainment to rants about high school math, it can also generate interest — and, ultimately, income — for your business.

No, blogs aren't for everyone. But see how they can accomplish these five basic business objectives.

1. Expose a new or little-known product or idea.



For Grant Smith, blogging makes a world of sense on a number of levels. Smith operates FirstStream, a Santa Cruz, Calif., provider of streaming video e-mail and related video communications products. Since many prospective clients might know precious little about video e-mail, Smith says his blog is a natural way to lay out specifics.

2. Improve your search engine rankings.

Blogging also puts you in touch with prospects in other ways. As any company with a position on the Internet realizes, hits via Google, MSN and other search engines can provide a groundswell of leads. Blogs can add further leverage to the frequency with which search vehicles identify you and your company, particularly if your blog allows readers to post a response.

3. Position yourself as an expert in an industry or field.

Blogging also can prove an implicitly effective marketing tool to establish yourself as an authority in your field. Not only can that generate leads, it also sends a positive buzz about your credentials through the marketplace.

4. Influence public opinion.

Blogging also allows users to bypass traditional journalistic venues and, in effect, become a publisher of their own thoughts and viewpoints. For Steve Rubel, vice president of client services at Cooper-Katz & Co., a New York public relations firm, they're also fast becoming a powerful influence on public opinion.

5. Engage in a forum openly with your customers.

Just as important, blogs that solicit reader comments can provide a sense of immediacy with your customers. In one respect, that's a ready source of feedback on what you're doing right and what you need to polish. Even better, it can also prove an ample supply of marketing muscle.

10 Secrets to Success

By Investor's Business Daily

Investor's Business Daily has spent years analyzing leaders and successful people in all walks of life. Most have 10 traits that, when combined, can turn dreams into reality. Each day, we highlight one.

1. **HOW YOU THINK IS EVERYTHING:** Always be positive. Think success, not failure. Beware of a negative environment.
2. **DECIDE UPON YOUR TRUE DREAMS AND GOALS:** Write down your specific goals and develop a plan to reach them.
3. **TAKE ACTION:** Goals are nothing without action. Don't be afraid to get started. Just do it.
4. **NEVER STOP LEARNING:** Go back to school or read books. Get training and acquire skills.
5. **BE PERSISTENT AND WORK HARD:** Success is a marathon, not a sprint. Never give up.

6. **LEARN TO ANALYZE DETAILS:** Get all the facts, all the input. Learn from your mistakes.
7. **FOCUS YOUR TIME AND MONEY:** Don't let other people or things distract you.
8. **DON'T BE AFRAID TO INNOVATE; BE DIFFERENT:** Following the herd is a sure way to mediocrity.
9. **DEAL AND COMMUNICATE WITH PEOPLE EFFECTIVELY:** No person is an island. Learn to understand and motivate others.
10. **BE HONEST AND DEPENDABLE; TAKE RESPONSIBILITY:** otherwise, Nos. 1-9 won't matter.

THE MAKING IT!™ DIGEST: MAKING IT! compiles news and information for and about small business, from various sources, for your convenience!

Loyalty isn't dead, employers have to earn it

By Anne Fisher (Excerpts Taken) Fortune Magazine

Everything the companies on Fortune's 100 Best Companies to Work For list do is aimed at keeping employees happy so they won't quit. But are workers less loyal than they used to be? The answer may surprise you.

The employers on our list of the 100 Best Companies to Work For believe in piling on the perks - anything from flextime and telecommuting to in-house gyms and free gourmet food. Says Robert Levering, co-founder of the Great Places to Work Institute (which compiles the list), "Everything these companies do is designed to inspire loyalty in employees. That's what it's all about."

Now that the economy and the job market have heated up a bit, corporate America is in one of its periodic tizzies about employee retention, and no wonder: Surveys say that as many as 75 percent of employees are job hunting. Our own online poll puts the figure lower, but still shows that a sizable 44 percent of respondents are either looking for a new job right now or expect to start sometime this year.

You may recall that I asked you last September to write and tell me whether you think so. Since very few of us spend 35 or 40 years working for the same company and then retire with a gold watch - let alone a defined-benefit pension - I also wondered how you would define the word "loyalty" now, assuming it still exists.

And you surprised me: I expected a barrage of e-mails like the one from a reader named Scott, who wrote that "employee loyalty died in the '90s. It was murdered by companies who let self-serving senior executives enrich themselves with obscene pay packages while they destroyed the careers and retirement dreams of millions of people with pointless downsizing and restructuring designed to justify their own compensation while doing little good for shareholders." Whew.

Yet the overwhelming majority - about 85 percent - of the e-mails that came in said that loyalty is alive and kicking. It's just taken a different form than in the old days, and no longer has much to do with how long a person stays in one place.

Wrote a civil engineer named Sarah, "I define loyalty as taking care of something or someone as you would yourself. It's not length of service, it's quality of service. Even if I stay a short time at a company, I'm loyal if I do good work and leave them in a good situation. Someone who works 20 years somewhere while stealing pens and playing solitaire isn't loyal at all."

Another banker, Steven in Indiana, has worked for 11 companies since 1979. He wrote, "I consider myself a loyal employee, which I define as working hard for your employer, being an advocate for them and speaking well of them - even after you are gone and working for a competitor."

If the new loyalty is short-term, it's also much more of a two-way street. "Career-wise, I know I've been at my current job too long. But I stay because, even when the workload is heavy and budgets get tight, my boss is careful to involve, encourage and reward me," wrote a 20-something named Dana. "The day I quit getting that is the day I dust off my resume."

Vinnie, at a New York investment bank, wrote that he turned down an offer for a job that would have paid 30 percent more because, unlike his current employer, the other company didn't allow telecommuting. "Employee loyalty exists," he wrote, "but it depends on what the company is willing to do for its employees."

Assuming my mailbox reflects how most employees see loyalty nowadays, the implications for companies are clear: Adopting some of the practices of the 100 Best and treating employees like royalty can keep turnover from skyrocketing. But even if you treat people as well as you know how (or as well as you can afford to), they won't hesitate to jump ship - while still considering themselves loyal to you, at least for as long as you've got them.



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Speed of Thought

By Nichole L. Torres (Excerpts Taken) Entrepreneur Magazine

How can you be as innovative as possible in your branding? By thinking fast. Quick branding inspires creativity, says Lynn Altman, author of *Brand It Yourself: The Fast, Focused Way to Marketplace Magic*. "The best ideas happen sooner rather than later," she says. "Having forever to finish a project is the antidote to creativity." She suggests setting a deadline (say five to 10 days away) and focusing your branding brainstorming on the three things you want your brand to accomplish. Then create a list of positioning ideas--make it a sort of visceral, gut-instinct approach to branding--and go from there.

Doing that brainstorm with someone else can also boost your innovation quotient. Talk to someone you trust creatively and get their take on your ideas. "There's no law that says to be creative, you have to be creative on your own," says Altman. Talk about what resonates with each of you about other innovative brands, and discuss different ways to create that in your own brand. In the quickly changing marketplace, there's not a lot of time or money to spend on long, drawn out research to see what customers might respond to. "I'm not saying that no research should be done--research does have it's place," says Altman. "[But] by taking things from the long, slow approach, [you're] less likely to have that real spark."

