

Corporate Weblogs

Weblogs as a Corporate Research Tool

AMY HISSOM, DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS

April 17, 2009
2209 Macrum Street
East Liverpool, Ohio 43920

Corporate Weblogs

Weblogs as a Corporate Research Tool

I have researched what Weblogs are and how they can be a potential tool for generating new external ideas for a company's operations within various departments.



FIGURE 1: HUMAN_NETWORK

After completing extensive research, I have concluded that starting a corporate Weblog is a great way to exchange ideas both internally and externally. Incorporating an internal Weblog will enable employees of different departments to communicate ideas with each other. Our company could start one internal Weblog where all employees can interact with each other, or each department can start its own Weblog and all can link to each other. Incorporating a separate external Weblog can increase product sales by communicating with customers to discover their

likes and dislikes. The Key here is networking. Just like a portfolio is a great addition to a job seeker's resume, a Weblog is a great addition to a company's Web site.

Research Plan

I approached this research project by asking the following questions:

1. What exactly is a Weblog?
2. What are the types of Weblogs used by corporations?
3. How are Weblogs created?
4. What are the benefits of starting a Weblog?

Weblogs

Usually termed "blog", a Weblog is a type of Web site used to share news about any subject. The difference between a Weblog and a regular Web site, is that a Weblog allows for two-way communication, while a regular Web site is only used for one-way communication. A company uses a regular Web site to speak to its customers by advertising products or services. The only way the customer can communicate back to the company is to either call, send an email, or send snail mail. A Weblog, on the other hand, allows visitors to communicate back to the company by way of "posts." All posts that are placed on a Weblog are arranged in chronological order starting with the most

recent post. Visitors to the Weblog can comment on the blogger's posts. A company can learn a lot about its customers by reviewing the comments about the company's posts. (Allison-10)

Types of Weblogs

While there have been many types of Weblogs created to cover just about any subject you can think of, the two main types of Weblogs concerning corporations are those that are internal and external.

Internal

Internal Weblogs are use by companies to share ideas between departments and employees. Also, included in an internal company Weblog are "announcements, including new products, new company directions, staff additions and changes, awards won, events, and especially 'fun' things like riddles, links to interesting sites related to the industry-even birthdays and other announcements can be included." (Wright)

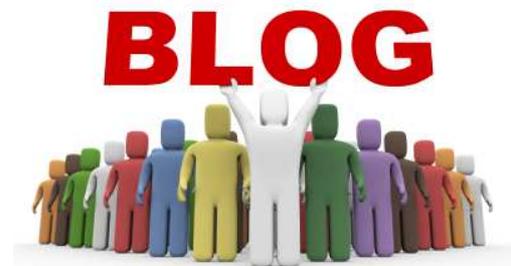


FIGURE 2: BLOG

Internal Weblogs encourage employee participation and allow for free discussion of company issues, which in turn, gives the company a sense of community. Internal Weblogs are usually set up on the company's Intranet and can also be used for company meetings. This comes in handy for those employees who have conflicting schedules or are in different locations. (Corporate Blog)

External

External Weblogs are used to communicate with the outside world, such as customers or other companies that are in the same industry as yours. External Weblogs are "often used to announce new products and services (or the end of old products), to explain and clarify policies, or to react on public criticism on certain issues." Linking your external Weblog to other Weblogs within your industry, will enable you to share ideas and views with other company's spokespersons. (Corporate Blog)

Creating a Weblog

There are two ways to create a Weblog. You can either host your own Weblog or have a company host it for you. To host your own Weblog, you need to obtain and register a domain name. You will also have to pay for a hosting package. This is done in pretty much the same way as purchasing a domain name and hosting package for a regular Web site.



FIGURE 3: SMALL-BUSINESS-BLOGGING-MED

There are many hosting services where you can purchase your domain name and hosting package together. One that comes to mind, and one that I use regularly, is GoDaddy's economy hosting plan which includes 1GB Disk Space and 100GB Bandwidth for blogging. If you purchase your domain name through them as well, you'll have a hosting cost of about \$60 a year. That's not too bad. However, their Web site economy hosting plan costs the same and includes 10 GB of Internet space, 300 GB transfer, 100 email accounts, 50 email forwards, and 10 My SQL accounts. (GoDaddy)

If your Weblog is company hosted, you are limited to using that company's templates, which in turn, eliminates a lot of customization options. Also, all the information that is posted on your Weblog becomes the property of the company hosting it. If you decide to host your own Weblog, then all the information that is posted on it is your property. Also, you can design your Weblog any way you want. (Allison-21)

When adding content to your Weblog, you should be sincere, focus on the individuals that will be visiting your Weblog, and be a part of the community. Remember that everyone is a peer. It's not all about you. (Foster)

Benefits

According to Matt Jackson, blog writer and owner of WebWiseWords, the 10 big benefits of a busy business blog are as follows:

1. They are quick and easy to set up without being technologically savvy.

2. They are inexpensive to set up.
3. They provide easy access to company news such as new products and latest offers.
4. They are search engine friendly and offer the opportunity to promote your Web site.
5. They make your company appear accessible especially if you allow freedom for all your visitors to post comments.
6. They can make your company appear as an authoritative on your particular industry.
7. They promote brand awareness. "The more a customer hears the name of your company the greater the chance of remembering it."
8. They help build relationships. Whether with your customers or employees, "a blog enables you to speak more freely and in a more informal and personable style than your Web site does, and your readers will soon feel like they know you."
9. They help you to gain an insight into your customers through the comments they leave on your posts and by tracking which posts are read the most.
10. They help reduce calls and emails. "You can use a blog to pre-empt questions that customers might have." (Jackson)

Adding An RSS Feed

An RSS feed is an XML Document that can contain a variety of things such as news articles or entries in a Weblog. RSS feeds are read by an RSS aggregator. An aggregator is used by those who frequently read Weblogs. (Skonnard)



FIGURE 4: RSS-ICON

By adding an RSS feed to your Weblog, visitors will be able to prescribe to your Weblog and receive updated information without having to visit your Weblog. By subscribing to an RSS feed, summaries of content are delivered to the subscriber and then they decide which articles they want to read by clicking on a link to that article. (Add an RSS Feed)



Figure: Before and After the arrival of RSS

FIGURE 5: AWR_RSS

Weblog Statistics

You will probably want to keep track of your Weblog visitors. There are many free services online that offer tools to do just that. A good choice is Statcounter. Statcounter offers a free service for Web site tracking that gives you statistics on how many visitors your site gets in a week to where they are located. After registering with Statcounter, you will need to generate a code for the particular site you want tracked. This code is then placed in the head of your html code that makes up your page. You can add this code to all pages. While logged in to your Statcounter account, you can choose the option of receiving weekly statistic email reports. Also, when logged in to your Statcounter account, you can see what browser is used by your visitors the most, what resolution they have their display setting at, what site they accessed your site from, what search engines were used the most to find your site, what pages of your site are the most popular, and they even list keywords that were used to find your site. (What is STATCOUNTER)

From what I have learned about Weblogs during my research, I have come to the conclusion that you cannot go wrong by starting a Weblog, or even more than one. A Weblog would be a great addition that would help this company exchange ideas with insiders and outsiders and help to learn more about its customers. Plus, it may even boost sales. Each week a different department can be assigned to write a post to the Weblog, keeping company news always current.

Bibliography

"Add an RSS Feed." Microsoft Office Online. 2009. 11 Apr. 2009

<<http://office.microsoft.com>>.

Allison, Devon, Sam, and Shannon. "How to Create a Blog." Weblog post. Business 237

- Blogging. 2009. 16 Apr. 2009 <http://profstudents.com/blog/?page_id=21>.

Allison, Devon, Sam, and Shannon. "What is Blogging?" Weblog post. Business 237 -

Blogging. 2009. 16 Apr. 2009 <http://profstudents.com/blog/?page_id=10>.

Awr_rss. Digital image. DeskShare. 17 Apr. 2009

<<http://www.deskshare.com/Resources/articles/rss.aspx>>.

"Corporate blog." Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia. 7 Jan. 2009. 13 Apr. 2009

<www.wikipedia.org>.

Foster, Dawn. "Starter Kit: Social Media and Social Networking Best Practices for

Business." Fast Wonder. 9 Feb. 2008. 13 Apr. 2009

<<http://fastwonderblog.com>>.

GoDaddy. "Quick Blogcast." Go Daddy. 2009. 17 Apr. 2009 <www.godaddy.com>.

Human_network. Digital image. Nokia Beta Labs. 2008. 17 Apr. 2009

<<http://betalabs.nokia.com/blog/2008/11/07/contactsfriending-hassle-what-is-the-right-way-forward/>>.

Jackson, Matt. "10 Big Benefits Of A Busy Business Blog (And How To take

Advantage)." WebReference. 2009. 16 Apr. 2009 <www.webreference.com>.

Konstantin, Androsov. Blog.jpg. Digital image. Internet Network Marketing 101. 2008. 16 Apr. 2009 <<http://internetnetworkmarketing101.com/>>.

Rss-icon. Digital image. Mutations. 25 Mar. 2009. 17 Apr. 2009 <<http://www.bioinf.org.uk/images/rss-icon.jpg>>.

Skonnard, Aaron. "All About Blogs and RSS." MSDN Magazine. 2009. 13 Apr. 2009 <<http://msdn.microsoft.com>>.

Small-business-blogging-med. Digital image. Small Fuel Marketing. 2009. 16 Apr. 2009 <<http://www.smallfuel.com/images/uploads/small-business-blogging-med.jpg>>.

"What is STATCOUNTER?" Statcounter.com. 2009. 18 Apr. 2009 <<http://www.statcounter.com/>>.

Wright, Karina. Blogging Essentials: Steps to Organically Boost Traffic & Cash Flow. 2008.