The Bloggers Edge
How To Use Weblogs As Marketing Tools
A Free Report By Paul Short http://GetBlogs.com

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This report is published as information only. The information herein is a collection of tips, techniques, opinions and URL's that were accurate to the best of my knowledge at the time of publication, and are based on my own personal experiences. Your results may differ greatly.

With that out of the way... lets jump right into the action.

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Introduction: Blogs As Marketing Tools

If you're an avid blogger, as I am, you may have noticed a few news stories from sites like USAToday.com and Yahoo.com reporting that blogs are "Dead Ducks" as far as making money is concerned. To a certain extent those stories are true. But they are shortsighted generalizations.

Very few bloggers out there are making any substantial direct income from their blogs. A couple I know of are Gawker Media's [Gizmodo.com](#) and Henry Copeland's [BlogAds.com](#).

Due to the media reports, I've also noticed a lot of bloggers comitting "Blogicide" (abandoning their blogs) because of dashed hopes of them ever becoming profitable. Another short sighted approach.

Of course, if someone is only blogging because of the money, and that's their only source of revenue, I can understand why they would want to persue other interests. But what they don't seem to understand is that blogs can be powerful tools if used in conjunction with other marketing efforts.

The rest of this report will outline and explain a few of the key points of using blogs as marketing tools.

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Establishing Trust &Credibility

The first, and probably the most important benefit of using a blog as a marketing tool would have to be the fact that it gives you a unique opportunity to build trust, credibility, and establish yourself as an expert in your field.

People: customers, prospects, site visitors, etc. who read your blog on a daily basis will get to know you. They will come to respect and trust you in a more personal way than can be accomplished by a few testimonials in a salesletter, or a one time mailing to a list.

Your blog will add another "layer" of personalization to the marketing relationship.

Each entry you make should speak directly to your visitors as if you were sitting at their kitchen table enjoying a cup of coffee with them. Your posts should be short, 300 – 800 words, and each one should make a point. It should be a complete thought backed up by some sort of fact or observation, or better yet a live link to another article or resource where the visitor can freely go to find out more information.

Each entry needs to also reflect your personality, your opinions or generosity. Write it as if you were speaking to a friend. You would rather deal with a friend or someone you trust right? Well your blog visitors are no different. Dont just post generic articles, post personal notes and ask for feedback and comments. (more on this in the next chapter)

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Instant Feedback Mechanism

Blogs can be invaluable as an Instant Feedback Mechanism.

Whether you post to your blog about changes you'll be making to your site, improvements to an outdated product, an upcoming event or product release, or that wicked shorthanded goal in last nights Hockey Game, always give readers the opportunity to make comments.

Within the hour you could have several comments and suggestions about your post. And as a business person, you know that reader and customer feedback are two of the most important aspects of any marketing plan.

Knowing what your customers and prospects want from you, or their thoughts and opinions on your business in general can help with things like new product creation, pricing adjustments, site redesign, etc.

Large corporations pay millions to market research companies to find out what their target market wants, but through the comments section of your blog you're getting it for free, AND getting the chance to interact with them in near real time as well.

I don't know about you, but I can't think of any more effective or efficient method of gathering customer feedback, other than an online forum or message board.

Also, each and every comment someone posts to your blog is new, relevant content being added to your pages – content you do not have to write yourself. Beautiful!

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RSS As An Alternate Communication Method

If you haven't heard about RSS by now, you've probably just emerged from a cave, or walked out of the woods where you were being raised by wolves.

RSS is an acronym for "Rich Site Summary", but is better known as "Really Simple Syndication". Simply put, it's content written using a combination of XML and HTML that's usually read using a "News Aggregator" or "News Reader".

Most blog software automatically outputs your content in the form of an atom.xml file or .rss file every time you make an entry. When people subscribe to your blog's "Feed" using their "News Reader", the reader automatically updates the feed and instantly notifies the subscriber as long as the program is open or active on their computers.

Let me repeat that:

When people subscribe to your blog's "Feed" using their "News Reader", the reader automatically updates the feed and instantly notifies the subscriber as long as the program is open or active on their computers.

In terms of marketing, that's a VERY Powerful Tool.

As you know, it's getting harder with each passing day to get your marketing messages out via email. Overzealous spam filters are tossing and blacklisting even the most generic of email newsletters – there are even reports that orders and reciepts from credit card payment processors are being nuked! That's bad news for marketers.

So using a blog with a syndicated RSS or XML feed, or publishing your newsletters via some sort of "HTML Scraper" and encouraging anyone you have ever been in contact with, or will contact in the future, to make the transition to accepting communication from you via feeds rather than email is a smart marketing move indeed.

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Blogs As A Natural SEO Tool

Every post you make to your blog is a new chunk of updated content for your site. If you include a main keyword phrase in the title of each post, and a couple in the body of that post, you now have optimized content.

These posts will migrate down your page, slip into "previous posts" list, on to your archives and pretty soon you have a highly optimized series of richly interlinked pages with keyworded anchor text as the title. Excellent for internal linking, on–site optimization and building an overall theme for the search engines like Google.

Another SEO benefit is that if you regularly update your blog, search engine spiders will crawl and index your site frequently because there's always something new for them to "Feed on".

One thing I must also mention here is that a lot of new bloggers neglect to add a link to the main page of their site or other important areas. Remember, your blog, whether you host it locally on your site or at a free host like Blogger.com, is another page or series of pages that adds to the overall theme of your site.

If you host on an outside server, your blog then becomes another site linking to your main site. This helps build link popularity, importance and authority for your main site. Most search engines now take this into account in their algorythms when calculating your sites position in their search results.

Not to mention the fact that other bloggers who read your posts are always looking for "blog fodder" and will link to or trackback anything that's worth reading. This serves to gain inbound and reciprocal links automatically, on usually relevant or "on topic" sites that would not have normally linked to you.

As you can see, overall, a blog is an ideal search engine optimization tool.

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Promoting Your Blog

Of course, you'll want to get the word out about your blog so I've included a few blog promotion tips, tools and resources here.

1. If your blog is new, post at least 3–5 messages there before you do much promotion. People who visit will want something to read. They'll want some idea of the quality of your writing, the overall theme of your blog and what you stand for as a blogger. They can't get that if there's nothing there to read.

2. Prominently display your RSS and XML buttons with a short description of what they're for. "Subscribe to our feed" or "Add us to your News Reader" will suffice for now. Later on, you may want to spruce it up a little. For instance, how would you attract newsletter subscribers? Use the same methods to attract your feed subscribers. Not many people are thinking along those lines right now so be different. Go for it. Be one of the first.

3. You've all seen the little "add to My Yahoo!" buttons on blogs right? Millions of people log into their Yahoo pages every day. Millions have it set as their home pages and if they subscribe to your feed through your "add to My Yahoo!" button, the title of your latest blog entry will be one of the first things they see when they open their browsers.

4. List your blog url and description to as many blog directories and blog search engines as you can find. Many of these sites like <u>Technorati.com</u> and <u>2RSS.com</u> automatically update your most recent blog entry in their "Recently Updated" sections so people can visit your blog directly from there.

5. Add your feed url to the above sites as well as sites like <u>Moreover.com</u> where news fanatics hang out looking for juicy stuff to read.

6. If some of the submission sites only accept RSS feeds and not XML, pop over to <u>FeedBurner.com</u> and set up a free account. The site allows you to automatically convert almost any feed version to a format readable by any site or

feed reader.

7. At FeedBurner.com you can grab the "add to My Yahoo!" button and XML or RSS button as well. Another one is an animated headline gadget that you can link to in your emails, forum posts, web pages, etc. Just drag the thing around the web with you and anyone and everyone will automatically see your latest blog headlines in real time.

8. Years ago, "Web Rings" were commonplace on the web. You don't see them much anymore on regular web sites – but they're flourishing in the blogosphere. Add your blog to a couple of "On Topic" web rings, display their code on your site and it's one more way for targeted readers and potential customers to be exposed to you and what you have to offer.

9. Link to your blog from other pages on your main site. Not only will this attract visitors to your blog, it's great for the search engines to find and index your blog as well.

10. Get yourself a "BlogRoll". Go to a site like BlogRolling.com, sign up for their free account, add their code to your blog and list all the blogs there that you read and visit on a regular basis. Your link will be automatically added to their blogrolls, or they may choose to include a link to you. It's another form of "Reciprocal Linking" thats very popular in the blogosphere.

11. Add your blog URL to the Sig of all your email messages. How many emails do you send out every day?

12. Read other blogs and when you find an interesting article that you'd like to comment on, do so. Make sure you're not just doing it for the link though. That's known as "Comment Spam" and is frowned upon. You need to add a meaningful comment that actually adds some value to the other persons site, or at least gives a unique slant or point of view.

13. Include your blog URL, as well as your feed URL in your email newsletters and encourage people to visit and subscribe. Some people may not know about News Readers yet so also include a link to a good quality reader like Feed Demon. Help to educate them on the advantages of communicating via feeds.

14. Include your blog URL in any online articles, reports, sales material, etc. that

you write and publish from now on.

15. Have your blog URL printed on your business cards, flyers, inserts, envelopes, newspaper and magazine ads, etc. Anywhere you advertise offline is a potential stream of new targeted readers and potential customers.

16. Have a few T–Shirts made up with your URL on them. Wear the shirt the next time you go out, especially to large events like bars, concerts, seminars, the fair or amusement park, etc. Shameless promotion? You Bet!

As you can see, the possibilities are infinite. Now let's cover what you need to do to promote each individual blog post that you make.

17. At the bottom of other people's blog posts, you may have noticed a little "Trackback" link next to the "PermaLink" or "Comments" section.

If you find that post on another blog interesting and worth blogging about, click that "Trackback" link in the post and you'll see the "Trackback URL". Copy and paste that url into your blog post and make it an active link. Write your own post around the theme of that URL.

When publishing your blog entry, choose to "Trackback" that URL. Essentially, all this does is sends a little message from your server to their server saying "I just posted something about you on my blog". The beauty of it is, your blog URL now automatically shows up on their blog.

If your blog software does not support Trackback, you can get the option for free from HaloScan.com

18. Each time you make a blog entry, you'll want to let the world know about it. You'll want to "Ping" all the major blog search engines and RSS sites. You can do this from one simple interface at a site called Pingomatic.com. All this does is let the big guys know you just updated your blog.

Phew, I hope that helped.

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Your Opinion Counts

Blogs are probably the most accurate "barometer" for popular opinion available on the web today. People who blog about almost any subject are contributing to the collective opinion about that subject.

If the media were to ignore the thoughts and opinions of people, and only publish the opinions of it's own journalists, every newspaper and TV news show would simply be spewing propaganda. What we are "fed" every day would be so biased it would be useless.

Major media outlets watch the political bloggers and collaberative blogs like <u>MetaFilter.com</u> and <u>Devoter.com</u> to find out what people really think about what's happening around them.

The media then reports these opinions as the general consensus and it gets read by politicians and "higher ups" who take it into account in their decision making processes.

Forgive me if it sounds corny but, ultimately, even though a lot of bloggers may not realize it, they are making a difference in the way the world works.

Now I could go on and on here, but anyone reading this has gotten the general idea by now. Blogging has many advantages and, to tell you the truth, if anyone is so shallow as to dismiss the value of blogs because they have no immediate profitability, they're not someone whose opinion I would feel comfortable with influencing the way the world works.

The Big Wrap Up

I know I could have went into a lot more detail with this report, but then it would have turned into a full blown ebook.

I'm in the process of creating a much more "In Depth" resource for bloggers – a private members site that will have literally hundreds of links to blog promotion tools, add–on's, articles, software, reports, etc. that will be constantly updated and added to.

If something like that interests you, watch this URL:

TurboBlogger.com

For now, if you haven't already, you can list your blog for free over at my blog directory and search engine http://GetBlogs.com.

If you'd like more information on blogs and blogging, pop over to http://weblogs.about.com. It's an excellent resource for both beginners and experienced bloggers.

Sincerely,

Paul Short
GetBlogs.com