

Blogging for business - is it right for you?

What is a blog?

The term blog originates from the words 'web' and 'log.' It is a simple website in which businesses and/or individuals can record thoughts, opinions and information. A blog is like a basic website, except it is free to set up and doesn't require so much technical knowledge, so you don't need to know how to write code! Blogs are generally user friendly, making the initial set-up a breeze.

What can a blog do for your business?

Blogging for your business can boost your brand. It can act as your voice, providing another outlet to express your company's goals and ideas in a more informative and interesting way. By doing so, your customers develop a familiarity with you and your team which in turn, builds trust and rapport.

Writing a blog should encourage you to stay up to date with industry trends and related content, making you more knowledgeable and capable of answering client queries on different levels.

Be savvy with keywords. With the use of certain keywords, your blog may appear at the top of search results. These keywords, along with other various blog promoters, are called search engine optimisers, or SEOs. Google and other such search engines are the first ports of call for people delving into cyber space. SEOs are an important part of directing traffic to your blog.

Don't discount blogging. Accept it as a challenge. You may be surprised as to what you learn about your business, your brand and your employees.

The benefits of blogs

- § It's a cost effective way to stay in touch with your customers
- § It directs steady traffic to your website
- § It builds brand awareness
- § It differentiates you from your competitors
- § You can provide information outside your normal marketing communication
- § It allows your customers to comment and provide valuable feedback

Effective blog entries

Now that you're committed to writing a blog, here are some key points to take into consideration:

- § Write catchy headings to entice the reader
- § Make entries topical where possible and relevant to current events
- § Use hyperlinks to other web pages relevant to the entry (set these up to open in a new browser window so that the reader isn't led away from your site)
- § Include attractive or controversial images, provided they sit in line with your brand
- § Keep your entries interesting for your followers; think of appropriate article length and formatting options, using bullet points and varied font sizes for headings

Getting started - setting up your blog

There are a number of different blog sites available and the registration for each is essentially the same. It's as simple as entering your email address and choosing a username and password. Each site has an array of professional, pre-designed templates which are incredibly user friendly when it comes to loading text and images.

Spend a decent amount of time on your blog design. Look at the different options available when it comes to backgrounds, font styles and sizes. Ensure you have your logo in a prominent place and the colours you use represent your brand. Getting the look right can be fun. Spend time playing around and see what looks and feels best.

Netiquette - blogging for business

Business blogging has increased rapidly, as by writing one and keeping up to date with it, you can help drive traffic to your website and increase your business' rankings in search engines. If you do have a business blog, think about what you're posting before you post it and remember –

1. Be mindful - always think about your audience and who will be reading your blog. Remember to keep each entry to a relevant length.
2. Respond to comments - don't ignore the people commenting on your blog. They, along with other readers, will show more of an interest and will respect your feedback. And if someone says something nice, share it on your blog!
3. Comment on other blogs - find other blogs that have similar business interests. It's not only healthy to be aware of the competition, but at the same time, you will raise your own profile.
4. Give credit where it's due - if you do post content from another blog, acknowledge your source and link back.
5. Be the bigger person - don't be put off if you encounter the odd mean-spirited comment on your blog. People feel safer in cyberspace to dash off a nasty post and click 'Submit' before they've thought it through. Respond calmly or not at all. If it's bad for business, just block them.
6. Check it - go over your spelling and grammar with the proverbial fine tooth comb. Readers will disengage if they spot too many errors.