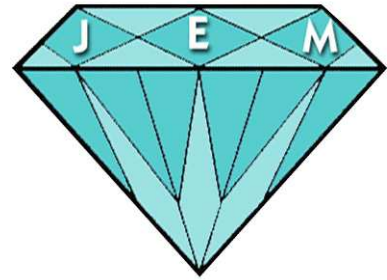


Blogging For Small Businesses – Adding Content and Pulling Traffic to your Website



A blog is a type of Website. It can part of (on-site) or separate from (off-site) an existing Website. Blogs provide an important marketing tool for a small business owner when properly used. They can pull traffic to a Website for someone operating on a shoestring budget. Once the techniques are learned, the art of business blogging takes only about 1-2 hours weekly.

Foundation...

Most Websites are just static brochures in the ever expanding digital stratosphere. 'Static' means most Websites rarely, if ever, change. (Note: Moving banners, photos sequencing, auto start music or videos, dancers, etc., do not count as change!) Most Website exist along side millions of other Websites. Only when a Website owner advertises their address (URL) on e-mails, advertising specialty items (i.e. pens) or through other traditional marketing media, will visitors perhaps show up. No advertising generally means no traffic; no traffic generally means few or no sales or inquiries are coming from the site.

Major search engines like Google do not like static, never changing, sites. Therefore static sites are generally ignored in free (organic or natural) search engine results. They rarely show up on the first few results page and are buried in the later results. That is bad for business since it is estimated that 60% to 82% (according to PEW Research) of mature adults use search engines to research their purchases ahead of time.

Instead of wasting time on static sites, Google's search engine robots constantly look for new and unique material to add to its library (Index) of information. This allows Google to provide current and relevant matches to inquiries (queries) typed into a search box. Google knows its users will return (repeat business is good!) when Google searches make visitors happy with good results and information. Of course, Google is a business, a rather large and growing business! It's ulterior motive is to sell ads to businesses and vendors.

When a landlord provides a steady stream of foot traffic, the cost of renting space in that mall is higher than those with less foot traffic. The same principle applies when you have a large steady stream of digital searchers on the Internet. The mall owner, or Google, charges more for advertising space! And as of the end of 2009, Google commanded over 75% of all world wide searches. The number of daily searches is in the billions!

Think of buying a new house. The further out from metropolitan centers you go, the fewer amenities and utilities you require, the cheaper the land should be. If your business needs consumer traffic and is located in an industrial park, they you must spend considerable advertising dollars to attract prospective clients. You can wager the rent will be higher if an industrial park is close to the airport, highways and railroads!

Getting back to blogs...

A blog is an integral part of what is referred to as Social Media, or Web 2.0. The word "Blog" is actually a shortened version of its original name - "Web log". Blogs can be a combination of text, photos, diagrams, charts, videos, audio, etc. They can provide links to other Web sites and other blogs. Most blog entries are usually displayed in reverse chronological order. Blogs also can allow readers to comment and ask questions. This provides a platform for interaction between the blog author and the readership.

The function of a Blog is usually described by most as a 'diary'. But blogs also provide commentary or news on particular subjects. There are personal (diaries, events, milestones, etc.) blogs, subject matter (education, art, politics, etc.) blogs, club (groups, members, etc.) blogs as well as media oriented (photos, sketches, etc.) blogs to mention a few.

But the focus here is on blogging for business. Suffice it to say business Blogs can be used for marketing, public relations and establishing or maintaining your brand (corporate identity).

Small Business Blogging recommendations as a Blog applies to your Website.....

A blog is easier to manage and much easier to update as compared to a traditional Website. Once certain techniques are learned, it is as easy as using a word processing program or sending e-mails. Blogs are generally written in a less formal, first person (I went to the...), structure.

An on-site (as opposed to an off-site) Blog enables and provides new and unique content for your small business Website. This converts your "static" Website into an active Website. And since search engines constantly look for new and unique content, they will revisit more frequently and add your new information to their Index files.

You can stop at this point if adding content to your Website is your sole purpose.

But if you are also looking to capture new business....

Commentary...

The blog attracts people and visitors. It then channels those interested (qualified) parties to specific products and services as well as to visit your main site's pages (brochure). The goal is to convert them to action (buy something, call you, register, contact us).

A business blog can be used for marketing purposes. Then its main purpose is to generate interest in your company. It does so by providing answers to questions or solutions to problems. With that in mind the best strategy is to share information, act as a learning center, answer questions, make friends, be informative and converse with customers and prospective clients.

To be effective and draw traffic a blog has to focus on what's on the visitors' minds, not your agenda. What questions are they asking? What information do they seek? How can you be a resource to them? What techniques, benefits, news, timely maintenance tips or other advice can you share?

To be effective a blog can not solely talk about your company. It cannot openly boast or promote your products and services. If so, it would be just another annoying source of advertising that we are all turned off by. A blog can also talk about and cooperate with competitors, business partners, common resources, etc.

Recommendation...

I strongly suggest using a Wordpress blog on your Website because of its inherent strengths and expansion abilities. But this is the subject of another discussion or paper. Some qualifications do apply concerning your Web hosting service.

One (or more) authors can practice blogging for free at Wordpress.com. This allows you to learn the ropes and be more efficient on a future on-site blog. It can also be 'private' (requires individual user names and passwords) while you learn.

If interested, I have free step-by-step guides to signing up for a blog, either as a user or as a blog owner/author. Please contact me for further information.

Tips and Hints (to mention a few) for Business Blogging...

Keep your articles short; consider the attention span of your readers.
Write top down in importance, as a newspaper article.
Break up longer articles into several, shorter posts.
Use visuals, pictures, videos; adults learn and remember via graphics, not words.
Provide links back to relevant pages on your site.
Monitor and reply to relevant comments quickly.
Set up spam and security functions.
Provide feeds.

Not quite finished yet..

There are numerous other free Social Media tools which can be used to market your Website and drive more traffic. Using these tools should further increase resulting sales conversions. Again, please contact me for additional information.

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