

WHITE PAPER

Blogger Relations

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Working with bloggers – to ensure you, your company, your products and/or your services are a part of the popular conversation – is essential in the age of the Internet.

Why Target Blogs?

Blogger relations can produce positive, measurable results when implemented effectively.

1. Measurable results: You can accurately track which blogs are “referring” traffic directly to your site by simply reviewing your web site statistics. Additionally, you can track online and retail sales in relationship to blog reviews.

2. Immediate response: Since bloggers can post whenever and wherever they want, the impact of blogger relations can be seen immediately. Blogger entries appear daily, weekly monthly or whenever.

3. Increased web site traffic: Many bloggers will provide a direct link to your company web site or a specific product page in their blog. Therefore, a positive review can send Internet users directly to your web site. A link to your web site in a blog post can also increase your site’s search engine optimization.

4. Increased corporate/product brand awareness: A positive endorsement from a blogger creates beneficial awareness for your brand/product/service among the blog’s readers. And since most bloggers archive their posts, the endorsement will remain on the Internet for others to discover through online searches.

5. Increase product/service trial and sales: Positive blog reviews can have a direct impact on sales. In a report last spring, Forrester Research estimated nearly \$400 billion in store sales (16 percent of total retail sales) would directly be influenced by web research in 2008. The number will reach \$1 trillion by 2011, or half of all retail purchases.

IT’S REAL AND IT’S GROWING

The first “web log” was recorded more than a decade ago, in 1997. Subsequently the blogosphere has exploded and continues to expand exponentially. Millions of consumers and businesses around the globe are now blogging and in the process, influencing more Internet users than ever before. According to recent research, there are already more than **184 million bloggers worldwide**. And nearly a third (32 percent) of Internet users say they trust bloggers’ opinions on products and services.

This is an unbelievable phenomenon and an extraordinary opportunity. Just as media relations allow individuals and organizations to reach key audiences through newspapers, magazines, television, radio and other traditional media, blogger relations allow them to reach key audiences through focused web sites that provide commentary, as well as photos, music, video and links on an endless array of topics.

In short, blogs are an amazingly effective way to reach target audiences, inform them, educate them, engage them and connect them to your brand.

BLOGGER RELATIONS TIPS

Do your research: Read the blog and determine the main topics the blogger addresses regularly. What are his or her interests? How does your product or service help him or her? Use this information to develop tailored communication.

Target the most influential bloggers: Use free tools like Compete.com and Technorati.com to determine what blogs are most influential. Compete.com will provide an estimate of how many people are visiting the blog and Technorati.com ranks blogs based on the number of other sites that link to a blog.

Start developing a relationships: The best way to approach a blogger is to read his or her blog and post a comment or two about a recent entry. Then contact him or her through email to determine their interest in your product or service.

Do not spam bloggers: Send targeted email communication to each blogger individually.

Do not send bloggers press materials: While some bloggers are also journalists, the vast majority of bloggers are not. They are not interested in reading news releases or pitch letters. Make your communication short and directed to that specific blog.

Ask bloggers to test products/services: The best way to encourage a blogger to write about your product/service is to offer a product sample or the opportunity to test your offerings. Some bloggers have product or service review policies. Be sure to look for a policy before offering your product or service.

Take advantage of blogger contests: Many bloggers host contests on their sites to drive traffic to the blog. If you have a relevant product or services that would benefit readers, contact the blogger and inquire about providing a product or service for their contest.

Be honest: Do not post a comment posing as a consumer to promote your product/service. Bloggers and blog readers are sophisticated and will know the difference. They are not afraid to call you out.

Continue to research blogs: Since new blogs are being created daily, it is beneficial to look for new blogs on a regular basis.

The Possibilities are Virtually Endless

Blogs can be categorized into four basic types:

1. **Personal** – blogs about personal interests (e.g., fishing, running, cooking) that are not associated with the blogger's career
2. **Professional** – a blog that incorporates the author's professional expertise (e.g., product development, healthcare, technology, marketing)
3. **Corporate** – a blog developed by a company to promote the company, its expertise and its product or services
4. **Media** – journalists/reporters who write blogs on behalf of a news outlet

Blog topics can and typically do cover every subject imaginable, from the trials and tribulations of parenthood to the management of corporate supply chains... and everything in between. And the more popular the subject, the more blogs can be found dedicated to the topic. As a result virtually every organization can benefit from blogger relations.

Blogs offer an excellent opportunity to achieve a glowing third party review or endorsement from influential members of your target audience. If implemented effectively, blogger relations will drive traffic to your web site, increase brand awareness and encourage product/service trial.

A Caveat

While blogger relations offer a tremendous opportunity to create awareness of and discussions about your products or services, it is important to recognize two undeniable truths: First, understand that like a news editor, a blogger can ignore your product or worse, write a negative review. Second, you have little to no recourse with bloggers who for whatever reason take a disliking to you and or your products/services.