

ARE YOU BLOGGING?

The current revolution in personal writing and instant publishing is called blogging. According to Webopedia.com, a blog (short for Weblog) is "a Web page that serves as a publicly-accessible personal journal for an individual. Typically updated daily, blogs often reflect the personality of the author".

A business blog is an informal, easily maintained way to regularly communicate with your customers and employees. Unlike traditional media that require lead-time for publishing, blogs are frequently updated, often daily, online journals of opinions, information and links to interesting content online.

According to one writer, "What sets blogs apart from other online writing... is their dynamic nature (as opposed to static Web pages) and their voice (style)." The voice of the writer of the blog, in a successful blog, is unique to that blog.

Blogs can pinpoint employees you don't want to hire and help you do market research. Yet, blogs can also criticize your company and review your products unfavourably. There are many reasons blogging is important to your business or organisation.

- A business blog is an informal, easily maintained method for regularly communicating with your customers. A business blog offers a more approachable, informal information-providing approach in which customers find enjoyment, get to know your company, and learn about your products, achievements, and innovations.

- A business blog is an informal, easily maintained method for regularly communicating with your employees. Whether you host your internal employee blog on a commercial site, on your webpage in a password protected location or on your Intranet, you have created a strong communication tool. Multiple people may post on the blog and information can be shared daily. No more waiting for the weekly one-page update or the monthly newsletter, employees can read company news every day. The blog differs from email in that a permanent record of posts is maintained by category. The second advantage is that all employees receive the same information at the same time.

- A business blog can provide a "voice" for your company that educates and informs your website visitors; it is more easily updated than traditional web pages. These are several good examples of company blogs, that are supported by the company. They tell potential employees about your company's culture. They make customers feel as if they know

your company. They inform your current employees and your customers about new products and services.

Take a look at companies like Sun Microsystems who encourage blogging and provide blogging space. More than 1,000 of Sun's 32,000 employees blog about their work (most at blogs.sun.com).

- Your employees may also be blogging. You want to ensure their blogs do not give away company confidential or proprietary information, or trade secrets. According to surveys over the past year, 8 million American adults say they have created blogs; blog readership jumped 58% in 2004 and now stands at 27% of internet users; indeed, the study reveals that 12% of Internet users have posted comments on blogs.

- In the same vein, as a company, you can search other business and company blogs for competitive and market intelligence you might not find available otherwise. Keep track of the blogs written by your competitors, their employees, and any industry sources that may blog about your industry, products, or customers.

- Since your employees are likely blogging, your company will want to establish policies and guidelines that require your employees to take care about what they express about your company and customers online. Blog posts can live forever. Once a blog post is picked up by a search engine such as Google, any potential customer or employee can find and read the blogs your employees post. Even if an employee deletes a post, archived versions stay online. Thus, it is better for you to provide guidelines on the front end rather than later when you are unhappy with an employee's post.

In the true spirit of blogging, find information about corporate blogging policies through The Big Blog Company at <http://bigblogcompany.net/>

Want to develop a policy? See this source for blogging policies www.corporateblogging.info

- Potential employees are blogging, too. You do search for the name of your candidates online, don't you? The search helps with background checking, and gives you more insight into the character, skills, and activities of your potential employees. Their personal blogs are an even richer source of information.

Blogging is a superb communication and information linking tool. Blogging is here to stay. Get on board for a ride through the blogosphere, the milieu and culture of the bloggers and the blogs. Your company or organization, your employees, and your customers will thank you for utilizing the power of blogs and bloggers, personal publishing for now and the future.

HR TOPIC

Is blogging journalism? Blogs mean that news is no longer just a domain for corporations - and I believe passionately that is the way it should be. Any guy in his living room can tell the world what he thinks - and that is a fundamental shift in the news industry. The public is better able to interrogate business media organisations. I do think blogging is legitimate as a tool, although it does depend on quality of course, there is a lot of rubbish out there... Alisa Bowen, Head of Reuters.co.uk