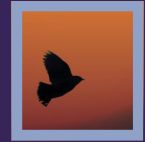




New Media Culture

from Chanda Communications and ZenGuide



Issue 1



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WHY BLOG?

Yang-May Ooi, Social Media Consultant, looks at the practical benefits of blogging

As more people engage online - to communicate with friends, download music, shop and get news and information, businesses are missing a trick if they fail to engage in this virtual market. There are many great reasons to get involved online through blogging. Here are just a few.

A Human Face - An authentic blog, especially by someone like a CEO, can give a human face to an organisation. A great example of this is Joe Duckworth's straight-talking blog. Joe is CEO at the Isle of Wight Council. He grapples with problems facing the Council as well as celebrates their successes. Talking about his son being mugged, he goes on to discuss what needs to be done locally about crime. This directness and mix of personal and public reveals to his constituents the real man behind his title and the hard work going on behind the scenes. When I spoke to one of Joe's colleagues, he reported that they had had a lot of positive feedback from the local people.



Joe Duckworth

Google Juice - Google and other search engines love newly updated web pages. A static website is likely to be lost in the crowd without intense search engine optimisation (SEO). A blog that is regularly updated will show up more easily in searches with minimal technical SEO - what matters is content and regular updating of the blog.

Retention - Once you've been to a static website, there's no real reason to keep going back if you've read everything on the site. A regularly updated blog can bring your audience back with fresh content that is

informative, entertaining or intriguing. People also come back because they like *you*, the blogger, so blogs with a personal voice tend to be more popular than those that hide behind "corporate-speak". Building a regular and loyal readership can add value to what you are already doing regarding client relationship management and also support conversion of potential leads to new clients.

Automatic notification - When a static website is updated, e.g. with news about your business, no-one knows about it unless you send them a separate email. With a well-managed blog, your readers can subscribe for automatic email notifications when you update your blog or they can subscribe to your blog via their blog aggregator. Any events or news you want to share will arrive in their inbox when you post it up on your blog - and also turn up in web searches: minimal effort, maximum impact.

Networks - Through a blog, you can engage with other bloggers who may blog about you or your business and link to your blog. Links drive new readers to your site and can help raise your blog in the search rankings. Other bloggers may also be happy to help you spread the word about an event, say, by writing it up on their blog. The key here is to fully engage with the blogging community as one individual to another - this means reciprocating by linking to other blogs, being generous with space on your blog to publicise other bloggers' events and doing all the things you'd like them to do for your blog.

The best way to start is to check out some blogs and enjoy being part of the new revolution. Some links are below.

Interesting Links

Joe Blogs (<http://tinyurl.com/2b22e3>) - my analysis of Joe Duckworth's blog with a link to the blog itself

Blog aggregators - e.g. Bloglines (www.bloglines.com); Google Reader (www.google.com/reader)

Community publicity - Malaysian bloggers often help publicise local events e.g. Kenny Mah blogging about an event run by KLue, a lifestyle magazine, and MPH, a bookstore chain (<http://tinyurl.com/27vvgb>)



Silvia Cambié is Director of Chanda Communication (chandacom.com), a consultancy specialising in stakeholder relations. She serves on the Executive Board of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) and is Immediate Past-President of IABC's Europe/Middle East region. Silvia is the author of X-Culture (chandacom-xculture.com), a blog on cross-cultural communication.

TRADING SECRETS FOR DIALOGUE

Silvia Cambie, Business Communications Expert, puts forward the case for engaging with social media

According to a survey conducted by the European Public Relations Education and Research Association (Euprera) in early 2007, European communicators generally agree that “Weblogs and Social Software are revolutionizing the way we communicate”. 89% of the professionals interviewed believe that blogs are “becoming accepted communications platforms” in the same way as web-sites. It is corporations and agencies that are still “unsure of the proven bottom line benefits in terms of monetary outcome”. They also “lack employees with the necessary skills to handle the new communications organizations”.

Social media are encountering the same scepticism with which organizations used to view the internet 10 years ago. But the recent mass migration of advertising to the internet has finally done away with the last doubts that were lurking in corporate minds as to the web and its ROI. In the UK, online advertising broke the £2billion barrier in 2006 and accounts now for 11.4% of all ad spending in the country, against 10.9% spent for newspapers.

Corporations may be reluctant to embrace social media because of the profound impact this new technology is likely to have on the way they communicate. The new participatory web with blogs, wikis and on-line networks is all about authentic communicative relationships. As Euprera points out, social media offer real opportunities: “organizations can engage in environmental scanning and receive feedback from their audience”. This means a radical change of behavior for organisations used to a culture of secrecy and to filtering information.

According to the on-line community MyRagan.com, “communicators face conventional barriers to using social media: executive support, budgetary constraints, fear of loss of control and legal barriers”.

However, it is still a battle worth fighting.

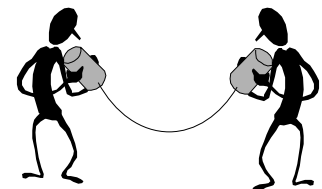
Communicators are well-placed to relate to different publics and to advise senior management on their information needs. It is worth trying to convince corporate leaders of the benefits of social media in such areas as press relations, marketing, public affairs, customer relations and employee engagement.

The case for employee communication should be particularly easy to make. Corporations have to get ready for the workforce of the future, the so-called “millennials”. These are young people who have grown up using participatory sites like My Space, Piczo and SecondLife. They are the new generation of knowledge workers and content creators. According to *Director*, the UK business leadership magazine, “their work isn’t based on processes, instructions from above or boss/worker relationships. Instead they spend their time applying knowledge, sharing work practices, collaborating and showing their own initiative.”

This is a new culture of authentic and transparent communication.

Web 2.0 (the second generation of the internet with tagging and social networks) might just be what communicators have been waiting for for a very long time.

As Ramon Ollé, CEO of Epson Europe, pointed out in a speech to the International Association of Business Communicators, “communication can only be effective if we really listen to others and find out what their questions and demands are.” Social media is giving corporations new tools for listening to stakeholders. And communicators are ideally positioned to drive the blogging revolution.



Interesting Links

Euroblog 2007 (<http://www.euroblog2007.com>) - website of the survey conducted by the Public Relations Education and Research Association (Euprera) in 2007 on the impact of new media on the PR and communication profession.

Digg News (<http://www.digg.com>) - user driven social content website

Scholarpedia (<http://www.scholarpedia.org>) - wiki and free peer-reviewed encyclopedia

MyRagan (<http://www.myragan.com>) - online community for business communicators

To find out more about social media and our services, please contact Silvia (silvia@chandacom.com) or Yang-May (ym@zenguide.co.uk)