



## COOL TIPS

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## When you should BLOG

### And when it's a bad idea

Most blogs are just traffic jams on the internet highway, started for the wrong reasons and lacking key ingredients and substance. Most are badly written by people who don't know or care and, frankly, it shows. All these charges apply to corporate blogs too, only more so.

So, before you rush in, take this quick sanity check:

#### DON'T START A BLOG:

- Just because **competitors** do.
- Because your **PR agency** thinks you should.
- To **promote** your company or products.
- Because you feel you must **share your thoughts**.
- Unless you have material of **value** or **interest**.
- Unless you can **sustain** it long term.
- Unless you're clear about **why, what** and **how to**.

However, there's more to it than just sanity. Here are 10 top tips.

#### 1. Ignore these points if you're a celebrity

People will always read celebrity blogs

e.g. Richard Branson <http://entrepreneur.virgin.com/>

Mark Shuttleworth, the father of Ubuntu Linux and first private space traveller  
<http://www.markshuttleworth.com/archives/date/2008/11>.

If Bill Gates had a blog, he'd be sure to be read too.

#### 2. Ditto if you're Apple or Google

If you're hot, high-tech and your fans demand it, write a blog or they'll do it for you e.g. *'Secret Diary of Steve Jobs'*. But unless you deliver what they expect, you'll lose even the most faithful in a click.

#### 3. Accept that it'll take time

If you're not famous and your company isn't hot and doesn't have a celebrity at the helm, you'll have to work much harder to gain readers and even harder to keep them. Accept this and read on.

#### 4. Don't use it to promote

Blog about the challenges your industry faces or useful insights customers can use. Good blogs are useful and inspire, entertain or educate readers; they're not thinly disguised ads, infomercials or self-basting commentary. If they are, people will scan them, delete them and unsubscribe.

#### 5. Don't bother if you won't share

Unless you are happy to share useful stuff, don't bother starting a blog. All successful entrepreneurs share their secrets. They know that it isn't the knowledge that's important, but how its applied. When they give their insights away, recipients regard them as gold dust and the giver as a true leader. If this is what you want, it's a good model to use.

## 6. Don't use it as a list builder

Blogs are about communities and sharing and receiving freely, not about building email lists and collecting opt-ins. The more useful info you share - about your industry, challenges, trends and lessons learnt - the more popular your blog will be and the more it will be shared. If your blog is not useful, is being used to build lists and blast people, the reverse applies.

## 7. Understand what it can and can't do

Your corporate blog is just one communication channel with your customers and market. You can use it to get frank feedback or as an immediate way to get useful news out. A corporate blog with the right form and content can do wonders; a blog that breaks all the rules is neither read nor shared.

## 8. Who should write it

Just because you are CEO, CTO or CMO, doesn't make you a great blogger. You may have valuable insights, but if you can't tell an interesting story, use distinctive phrases or add some humour or personal insight, don't bother. Find the person in your company who can and support him or her - or you'll lose your audience in another click.

## 9. Accept feedback

Allow visitors to comment on your blog and publish the raw feedback (after filtering it for SPAM). If want to fine-tune your blog, you need to listen to blunt feedback and act on it. You also want open dialogue between your readers. Blogging is about interaction, so your audience needs to know you're real, you're listening and acting on what you hear.

## 10. Know what your audience wants

If you're close to clients and business partners, to your sales team and support people, you'll know what's hot or you can research or use website hits as a guide.

*A prime example:* In 2008 we wrote a user piece called 'How to make Vista Fly' <http://www.technoledge.com.au/resources.htm> which has been downloaded 458,000 times. This showed just how sluggish Microsoft's 'new' OS and how frustrated users were at the time. Even though Windows 7 has been out for some time, this piece is still being downloaded.

## 11. Examples

Here are some corporate blogs—some good, some not so good. Judge for yourself.

<http://www.37signals.com/svn/> - a great blog, very successful, lots of stuff about a favourite subject - User Interface design - and very little about the company.

<http://googleblog.blogspot.com/> - the exact opposite. Google clearly thinks it's a celebrity; the blog is about Google and nothing but Google.

<http://fastlane.gmblogs.com/> - multiple bloggers and lots of photos.

<http://storageeffect.com/> - blog by hard drive maker Seagate; a crashing bore of a topic? Actually, no. This is a great model.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/theeditors/> - inside broadcasting, with multiple editors contributing; interesting idea.

<http://my.barackobama.com/page/content/hqblog/> - of course!

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