



Don't Just Sit There Like a Lump on a Blog

Are you blogging? Have you been blogged by someone else? The blog (short for web log) is basically an electronic diary and *the* hot communication tool. Bloggers post their thoughts, ideas, news tips, etc. for the world to see and comment upon. Friends are made, questions are answered, controversy is raised, deals are done. And it didn't take long for smart marketers to figure out how they could develop their own blogs to promote their companies.

Kathleen Goodwin, former CEO of iMakeNews, coined the phrase b-blog (a blog used by a business to promote itself) and notes the following benefits:

- B-blogs are highly strategic, here-to-stay desktop tools that can strengthen relationships, share knowledge, increase collaboration and improve branding.
- Articles within newsletters can be linked to a blog, extending life and creating a massive conversation.
- You can offer a bidirectional forum to customers to get true, personal opinions on your products and services.
- Company experts can start a blog and become industry experts, helping your company edge out competition and, through this interactive forum, draw customers into another exchange of information and thoughts.

Goodwin suggests that a b-blog should be complimentary to your newsletter, not a replacement. It should be timely, because today's business doesn't operate in a controlled, scheduled way. It should be informative, not a place for carefully crafted corporate speak nor a place to rant and rave. A b-blog should be archivable, searchable and should flow easily from topic to topic.

Here are some of Goodwin's how-to tips:

- **Create a plan.** Establish goals and objectives.
- **Identify the editor.** Find someone who can step into the role of pundit. Look for an idea-leader who's just waiting to be unleashed and empowered.
- **Find the right tools.** Search wisely — there are great new tools announced every day.
- **Develop standards.** Because of b-blogs' free-flowing nature, establishing ground rules for your publishers is important. Include confidentiality policies, product disclosure guidelines, and basic suggestions as to what's politically correct (and what's not).
- **Facilitate discussion.** Before you officially launch your b-blog, plan topics that will start the initial discussion.
- **Drive traffic.** Use your newsletter to announce and promote the b-blog. Offer to email it to subscribers or provide the option to visit the b-blog directly.
- **Analyze.** Blog functionality should have the same analytical capabilities as a newsletter. So as with your newsletter, make sure you know who reads what, when, and where.
- **Monitor appropriately.** Periodically check in on discussions and see if they flow the way you anticipated and if they meet your goals.

Kathleen Goodwin serves as an advisor to early-stage companies and has been responsible for several successful new-business launches. You can read more of her thoughts on blogging, newsletters and marketing at www.clickz.com.