



Bloggers Guide To Profits

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Introduction

What are blogs?

As you might have experienced, surfing the web was a fairly passive activity in the past. Like reading or watching TV or a bit of a combination of the two. The website as such, was all designed to be a rather one-way informative medium. Then came the advent of the 'blog...

So what on earth, er, the World Wide Web, is blogging? Abbreviated from "web log" a blog is simply a stream-of-consciousness kind of writing. Whether you are a major celebrity or a high school kid, you can blog. It requires no technical skill at all and costs almost nothing. They have become amazingly popular and are continually in the news. Recently, some people have been fired by major corporations for blogging about the goings-on at work! So you know there are plenty of readers out there.

What's the buzz and what's in a blog anyway?

What can be included in a Blog?

What could you include in a blog? Practically anything that comes to your mind.

In many instances, the discussion depends upon the theme of the website or a web page itself that is associated with a blog. Blogs are an excellent way of expressing personal opinion. These range from discussions about news, current events, sports, hobbies, careers, and various other topics. If you can think it, and you can type, you can blog it, more or less.

Blogs are being used effectively now by businesses as well. As stated earlier, Blogs are fast gaining popularity as an efficient marketing & advertising tool that helps businesses promote their products and services. Much more on this in a moment...

Why Blog?

As described earlier, blogging does not need any sophisticated programming skills, and even does away with complex coding. With almost no barrier to entry, it is estimated that there are more than 10 million blogs on the Internet today and growing.

Since bloggers enjoy the freedom and power of posting their thoughts and views instantly, blogging empowers visitors with a sense of instant gratification.

We all might want to blog – just ramble on and often complain! – for personal reasons or for fun. We perhaps want to stay connected to the big wide world out there, get something off our chests, or try to entertain far-away friends.

Blogging, much like a website, gives you a worldwide reach. Besides creating and maintaining a blog is far easier, quicker and cheaper compared to managing a website.

Are you starting to see the business potential here?

Business Blogging!

What is business blogging?

When the world of blogging got buzzing with activity, the interest it generated did not go unnoticed by profiteers.

Business Blogging, sometimes called B-Blogging, is a recent development, but it's growing fast and you'll see why.

Today blogging emphasizes being informational rather than promotional. Unlike mass marketing, blogging gives the organization a human face. In other words, marketing your business with blogs is as close as it gets to face-to-face marketing. And this is something that is seen as the biggest advantage of blogging...it's a personal thing. Not some scary company talking, but a *real* guy or gal.

Hence, blogging for business is a strategic activity designed to promote the organization's vision, provide an online brand, secure untouched markets, and establish the company as the leading voice in the industry...all by making the company seem more human, low-key, and accessible.

Small Businesses and B-Blogging

Small businesses have the opposite problem – they often want to seem bigger and less personal.

You will find that a large number of small business owners are partnering with business bloggers and search optimization firms, because of the potential rewards it holds for them.

It's increasingly obvious that large numbers of eyeballs don't matter to most online businesses – it's the right eyeballs. The key is to get visitors who are actually interested in your products and services. Blogs do just this.

According to recent studies, around 10 % of small businesses have already incorporated blogging as part of their marketing approach. Further, another 16% plan to include blogging in their plans in the next two years! These are big numbers, and growing.

What's the appeal?

You will find many instances where blogging can be useful for the small business community. A few segments, where blogging can be especially useful, are as follows:

1. **Business Consultants:** As a business consultant, you almost certainly need to maintain closely-knit contacts with the business and industry. You also need to nurture these links with a lot of hard work and skill over long periods of time. Blogging can help business consultants keep in touch with wide spectrum of the business community, nurture further contacts and keep networked with other business consultants.
2. **'Bread and Breakfast' Businesses.** Bread and Breakfast business depend to a great extent on seasonal traffic; hence keeping in touch with old clients is important to get repeat business from them. You can use blogging to stay in touch with these individuals through the year.
3. **Specialist Retail Agencies:** As a specialist retailer, you may have an edge over other retailers if into selling specialist products, say, mountaineering equipment or exclusive skiing equipment. Blogging can

help you to interact with a niche clientele, by including news and posts about such specialist equipment and exclusive product updates.

4. **Non Commercial and Not for Profit Agencies:** If you are a non commercial **agency** spread over a large geographical area, you can include blogs to keep members informed about meetings, activities, and further developments.
5. **Crisis situations:** Blogs maintained in crisis situations help people keep in touch with the latest developments, rescue operations and can even provide information about missing or injured loved ones.

You will also find that encouraging customers to provide feedback is an excellent way of utilizing blogs. They help generating new ideas as well, as they are an excellent way of getting a customer's message across to the company.

Advantages of Business Blogging

Simply put, blogging is another way of getting the message across to an intended target audience. It is all about optimizing sales by maximizing relationships with your target audience. Blogging is cheap compared to almost any other marketing method.

Boosts Online Branding

As the owner of a small business, you can effectively boost your online presence by blogging about the products and services offered, the industry and related interests, which can help generate interest and can enhance sales too. Just like nobody knows how tall you are on the radio, nobody knows the size of

your business on the Web. Talk like you own the market and before long you probably will.

Enhancing customer relationship programs

Business Blogging is a sure way to get in touch with a large customer base without using email and other potentially annoying and ineffective techniques. You can make this happen by keeping updated blogs about customer interests, new products and services, current and industry related news and such.

The benefits you can obtain here at low to no cost can be equivalent to an email marketing campaign at a fraction of the costs and without potentially annoying your client base.

Enhances Search Engine Optimization

As blogging does not require any fancy graphics, or complex HTML code, it is virtually the darling of search engines. Many search engines frown upon heavy and unnecessary graphics, but tend to index text.

Many search engines like Google rank a site based upon the number of links that point to it. If you provide useful and interesting content increases interest among readers, it makes the blog site even more popular. Linking to other interesting sites and including important keywords while writing the blog can increase viewers. Blogging can promote a website by virtue of the number of links you as a blogger could put in your website.

These links can cause a domino effect because they will refer to another website, which in turn will refer to another, and so on and so forth. If a myriad of links start pointing to the website, this can do wonders for website search engine rankings. This is also sometimes known as a 'viral' effect, referring to

the way a virus multiplies in a host organism. When a blog links to websites similar in theme or idea, webmasters may reciprocate by linking back. This increases the affinity of search engine robots which may give a higher ranking to the website.

Better Tool for Media and PR

Blogs are an excellent PR and media relation tool too, as every marketing manager might have found. If you place advertisements in traditional media like newspapers and television, they can be extremely expensive. Whereas, the cost benefits offered by blogging could be peanuts compared to a television or a newspaper campaign and your material will generally have much longer life – in theory, forever.

Enhances Niche markets

If you sell something online that other websites also cater to, as an online retailer it could be extremely difficult to obtain and edge over others. Selling to a niche market can be an advantage because there is something unique to talk about in detail, which others lack. You might regularly blogging new developments, also specialist talk. This can attract niche customers to the site and can significantly increase customer attention and consequently your sales.

Blogging for business

A few simple rules to follow while developing your B-Blog are:

- a. B-blogs should be updated on a timely and routine basis. Never should stale information be left lingering on a b-blog.

- b. As a blog is informative, its content should be crisp and natural, and not ordered or planned like that in a newspaper. Also, it should be easy to access old blogs in an archive.
- c. Develop a theme, and form an original writing style. This will make you a unique blogger, and give you a strong and loyal audience.
- d. Clarity and simplicity in a blog is of utmost importance!
- e. Use keywords extensively to entice search engine robots. This includes visibility in search engine listings. Use key words in titles as well, though titles should not be more than 10 or 12 words long
- f. Frequently published blogs will mean search engines will come back later to index the site.
- g. Use your spelling and grammar checkers!
- h. Syndicate your blog with RSS service (discussed later) to boost readership.

Blogging Resources

Blogging software & tools

Now that you know what a blog is, and how it can benefit your business, let's look at some of the most commonly used ways to get your blog up and running.

WordPress

WordPress is the most popular blogging software used online today. This is because it is not only free to use, but has a huge support community that helps new and veteran users alike.

The biggest advantage to using WordPress, is that it is constantly being updated and improved upon. In fact, because it is open source software, there are hundreds, if not thousands of programmers constantly creating WordPress plugins.

These plugins are basically like bonus features you can use with the software, to upgrade its functionality (Making your life much, much easier).

You can view a list of these plugins at:

<http://wiki.wordpress.org/?pagename=Plugin>

One major feature of the software, is that it automatically creates a RSS feed for your blog (The benefits of RSS will be discussed later on).

Each time you post to your blog, the software automatically updates your feed. This is a dynamic feature that will help expose your blog to a wider audience, and best of all, requires no extra work on your part.

Installing WordPress

The first step you will need to take, is to download WordPress here:

<http://wordpress.org/download/>

You can then follow the detailed installation instructions. Should you run into any problems, don't hesitate to use the support forum at:

<http://wordpress.org/support/>

After you have installed the software, you will want to change your theme. The theme is simply the layout/design of your blog. You can make it look as simple, or as creative as you wish.

To choose a theme for your WordPress blog, visit:

<http://wordpress.org/extend/themes/>

Once you have chosen your preferred theme, simply download the file to your hard drive. The zip file should contain easy installation instructions for changing your theme in a few simple steps.

These are just the basics you need to get started using WordPress to power your blog. As you become more familiar with the software, you can slowly begin to use more of the advanced features and plugins.

Popular WordPress Plugins

As we discussed earlier, there are a vast amount of helpful plugins you can use for WordPress. Here are five of the most popular plugins available:

[Spam Karma 2.0](#) – One of the most frustrating obstacles to running your own blog, is automatic comment spam. This is an underhanded tactic that unscrupulous marketers use to get free advertising on your blog.

Spam Karma 2.0 is the best anti-spam plugin available. Without getting too technical, this plugin will run all comments through a series of spam tests before posting them to your blog.

[Click here to download this plugin](#)

[WP-Contact Form](#) – This plugin allows you to add a contact form to your blog in two easy steps.

[Click here to download this plugin](#)

[One Click Backup v. 1.3](#) – Quickly and easily backup your blog using this plugin.

[Click here to download this plugin](#)

[Google Sitemap Generator](#) – One of the hottest ways to get your Website/blog pages listed on Google is by using a *Google Sitemap*.

Use this plugin to instantly generate your own Google Sitemap, and you should see a dramatic increase in the pages Google indexes from your blog.

[Click here to download this plugin](#)

[WP Subscribe To Comments](#) – This plugin will give your readers instant email notifications when there are new comments to your posts.

This is a great way to keep your visitors coming back to read your blog!

You can download it here:

[Click here to download this plugin](#)

Blogger

If you are searching for the easiest way to start a blog, then perhaps Blogger is the solution for you.

You can setup a Blogger account and add your first post, literally within minutes.

The drawback is that you only have so much control over the design/layout of your blog, and a limited amount of features.

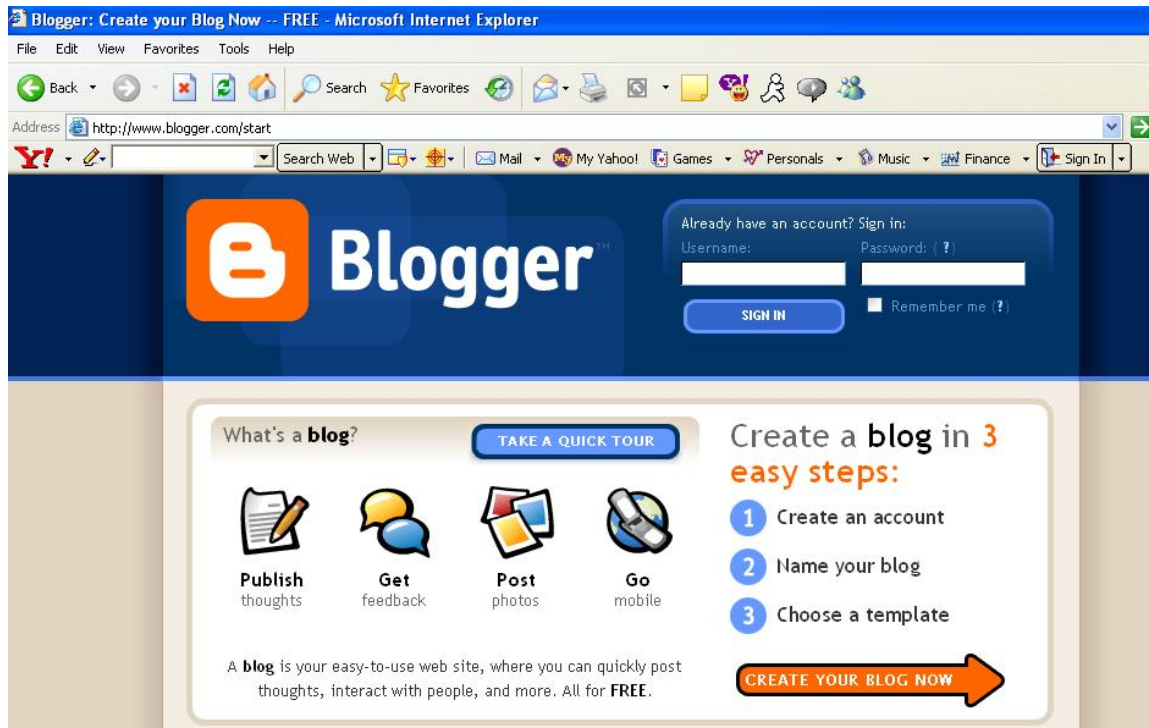
If you can live with these shortcomings, then a Blogger account is your best option.

Setting Up Your Blogger Account

Step 1 – Getting Started

Follow the link below and click on the “Create Your Blog Now” arrow.

<http://www.blogger.com/>



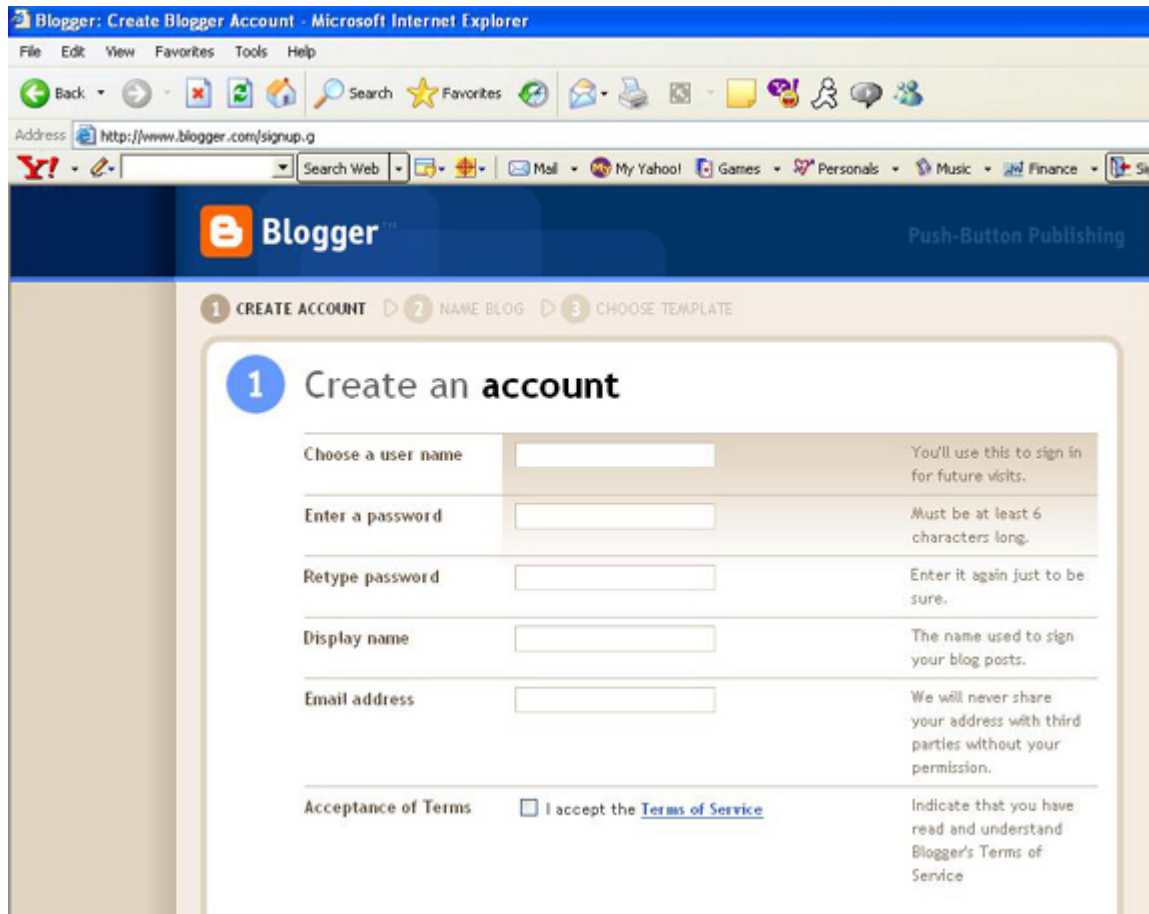
Step 2 – Create Your Account

Once you have clicked the arrow, you will be taken to the **“Create An Account”** page.

Here you will create your account username/password (Be sure to write down this information and put it somewhere safe).

Don't forget to read over the *Terms of Service* agreement, and check the acceptance box.

Click on the “continue” arrow and move on to step 3.



Step 3 – Name Your Blog

The next step is to name your blog.

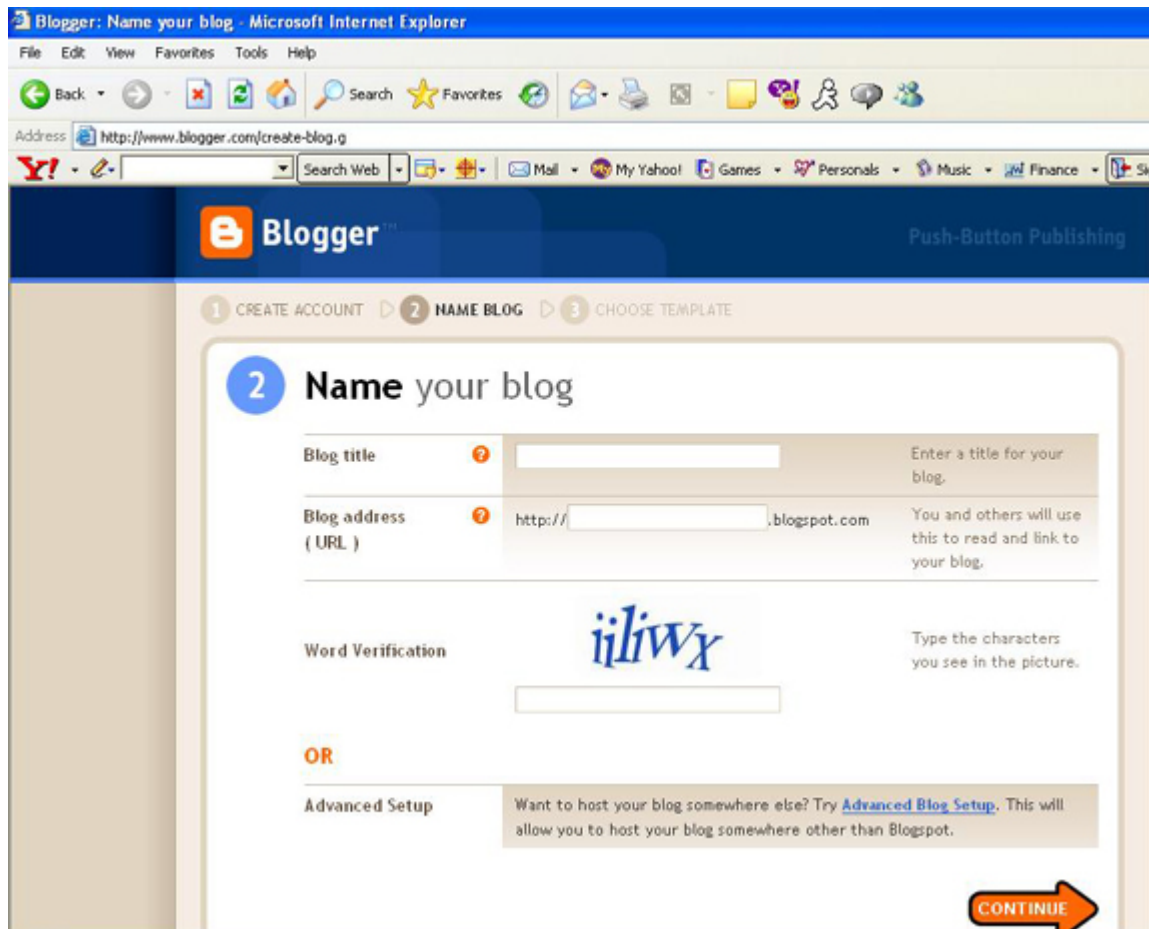
It is a good idea to name your blog after the theme for which you intend to use it (I.e. Water Gardening, Ice Hockey, etc). Simply naming your blog, "My blog" or "Jane's Big Blog" is unprofessional and generally won't catch people's interests.

Putting some extra thought into your blog name can pay huge dividends down the road.

Once you have decided on an appropriate name, you can fill out the forms.

Hint: To keeps things simple, keep the blog title and blog address the same.

Ignore the advanced settings option, and click on the orange “continue” arrow.



The screenshot shows the Blogger website's 'Name your blog' setup page. The browser title is 'Blogger: Name your blog - Microsoft Internet Explorer'. The address bar shows 'http://www.blogger.com/create-blog.g'. The page has a blue header with the Blogger logo and 'Push-Button Publishing'. Below the header, there are three steps: 1. CREATE ACCOUNT, 2. NAME BLOG (selected), and 3. CHOOSE TEMPLATE. The main content area is titled '2 Name your blog'. It contains three input fields: 'Blog title' with a placeholder and a note 'Enter a title for your blog.', 'Blog address (URL)' with a placeholder 'http://' and '.blogspot.com' and a note 'You and others will use this to read and link to your blog.', and 'Word Verification' with a picture of the characters 'ijliwxy' and a note 'Type the characters you see in the picture.' Below these fields is an 'OR' section and an 'Advanced Setup' link with a note 'Want to host your blog somewhere else? Try [Advanced Blog Setup](#). This will allow you to host your blog somewhere other than Blogspot.' At the bottom right, there is a large orange arrow button labeled 'CONTINUE'.

Step 4 - Choose Your Blog Template

You are almost there, just one more step to go!

This is where you get to have a little fun and let out your creative side, by choosing your blog template.

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