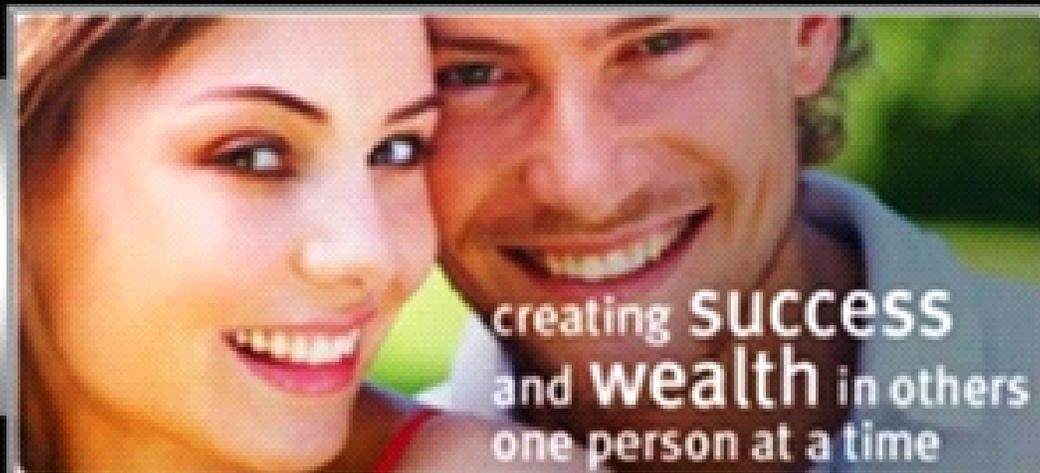
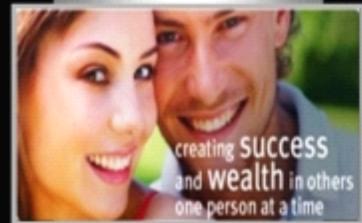


How to Easily Build and Develop a Successful Business Blog

by Gary Baker

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While all attempts have been made to verify information provided in this publication, the author assumes no responsibility for errors, omissions, or contrary interpretation of the subject matter herein.

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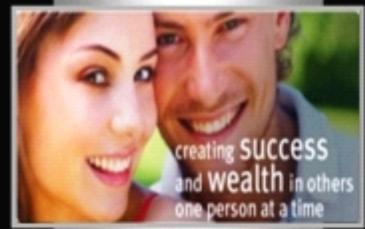
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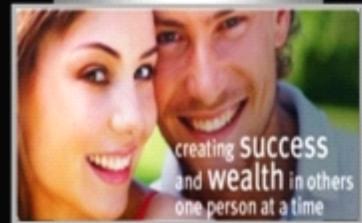
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Why Blog?



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Why Blog?

I am convinced, given the wide range of potential benefits and the different ways in which a small business can use a blog, that the discussion should not be if a blog is worthwhile but rather where its focus should lie.

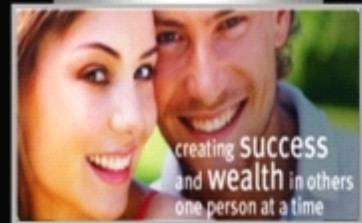
The potential uses for a blog are wide ranging and cover both external blogging as well as internal. The principles in both cases are the same and rely on a clear focus.

So what is this blogging all about and why is it so important to my business? Well, hopefully we will be able to help you discover the answers to these and a lot more besides during this eBook. To start with, I'd like to introduce you to a few fundamentals about blogging and how it can be used.

What is a Blog?

The name comes from a contraction of “web log” and it started life as a personal online publishing system. The blog would be a place on the internet where the author (normally an individual) could publish their thoughts and opinions on whatever subject they liked.

www.freeblogfactory.tk



These would then appear in chronological order and we need to make a very clear distinction between personal blogs versus business blogs.

A personal blog is generally set up to allow the author to discuss their views on anything and everything, so the topics change with each post according to mood or inclination. This is where blogs started and it is essentially a personal diary or scrapbook, which can be great fun to both read and write.

A successful business blog will be started with a particular aim in mind and should be very targeted in terms of its subject matter. In many of the best cases, it will focus only on a specific market area or niche.

The writing will hopefully entertain as well as inform but whether it's a series of articles, an overview of industry events or an internal information resource, it should all revolve around the area of focus.

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Why? Because the audience it was looking to reach will expect it - that is why they were attracted to it in the first place and that is why they will return and recommend it to others. As a result, the blog's audience will grow which in turn will help to extend the business's reputation and reach in its chosen market or niche.

There are a number of key elements and features in blogs. These are critical to why they work so well and, when combined correctly, set them apart from general websites and allow them to offer the unique abilities that they do. The ones that are worth highlighting are:

Automatic Structure: the 'categories' and 'archives' are integral parts of a blog and each post will automatically be placed correctly according to the selection you make. This gives great organisation and structure to a blog which is perfect for visitors and search engines alike and allows you to concentrate on the content.

No Technical Knowledge Required: once set up correctly, there is no technical expertise needed to maintain a blog. The writing is key of course, but this is done through a



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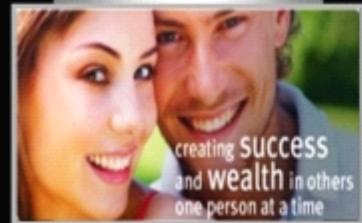
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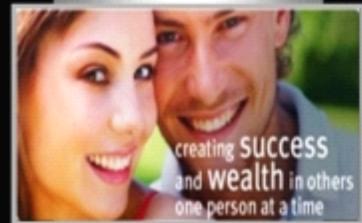
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“Windows” type of interface so anyone can add content and there is no need to rely on a web designer to update it for you.

Comments: readers can respond to articles that have been posted which helps to initiate a dialogue with potential clients, with suppliers, with partners or between staff according to what your blog is designed to achieve. The perfect opener to developing a relationship and a network!

Permalinks: every post and every category has its own individual address, forever! This means that you can refer to them in articles, emails, newsletters etc safe in the knowledge that they will be found. This is also great for the search engines.

Internal and External Links: blogs thrive by links and referring to other articles so that conversations and ideas can be taken up and developed.



At its best, this allows a viral effect in terms of promotion and helps develop both relationships and networks. The internal linking again helps search engines and readers alike.

Multiple Authors: not only can one person add content but you can allow access to any number of people so that you have several authors contributing to a topic or a series of topics.

It also opens up the possibilities for blogs as tools ideally suited to internal communications within a company.

Search Engine Magnets: with regular posts, categorized content and search engine friendly links and addresses, personal and business blogs become ideal places for search engines to find the type of content they love and so rank your blog very highly!

Why Should a Business Have a Blog?

As a top level overview, blogs will help to:

- display your expertise in your field, and build your reputation and credibility

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- open dialogue with potential customers and strengthen relationships with current clients
- improve your search engine rankings and increase visitors to your site
- broadcast information to those you want to receive it
- facilitate a greater understanding of your business and what it can offer

They also integrate perfectly as part of your online marketing activities whether your blog is part of your current website or stands alone.

Of course for those businesses without a website, then it may be appropriate to use the blog as your website rather than pay for one which others may need to update for you.

It is an excellent marketing tool. With search engines now the pre-eminent research tool, it is important for a company to have visibility on the web when customers are making buying decisions. Blogs give a timely boost to this.



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It is excellent as a tool to help to generate traffic for a website and to inform (and hopefully impress!). It will also give the opportunity to pre-qualify potential customers by sharing information with them.

The more that they know and understand about you and the services / products that you supply, then the more likely they are to feel secure in buying from you when a need arises – and indeed the more quickly that they may realize that that need does exist.

In terms of specific uses, they are excellent for “educational marketing”, product testing and announcements, broadcasting public relations (in terms of press releases, company news, case studies etc), getting customer feedback, delivering promotions and announcements and they open the door to a whole host of other possibilities.

They are also very powerful tools for developing information sources, teams and relationships inside an organisation. In some circles, it is considered that for larger organizations, this will become one of the main uses of a blog because of its ability to store and share information.



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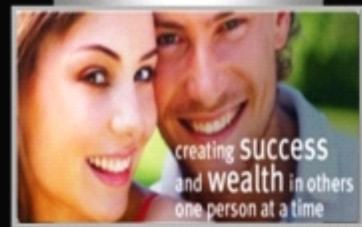
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It is not to be used solely as a direct selling tool – use it to inform and develop relationships, get feedback on ideas, show depth of knowledge but don't directly sell with it. That will turn away the readers at a very early stage.

At the end of the day, a blog is a marketing and business tool which should be used as part of an overall marketing campaign. It is not a magic wand that will send low sales levels through the roof or suddenly transform your relationship with your clients.

However, it is hugely influential and an excellent way to engage with potential customers, inform and influence them in a way that no other method can achieve with the same degree of interaction and reach.



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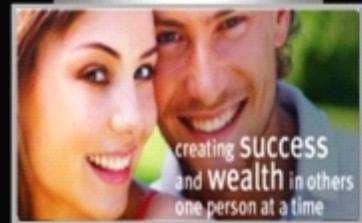
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Just some of the examples are listed below:

External

- Positioning as an Expert / Niche Branding / Educational Marketing / Building a Network
- Enhancing Reputation and Credibility / Controlling your Niche
- Broadcasting News and Information / Developing a public face for the business
- Broadcasting Press Releases / Promoting Conferences, Seminars, Exhibitions and Events
- Developing Better Client Relationships / Promoting Client Case Studies
- Creating Product Evangelists / Gaining Customer Feedback / Customer Support

Internal

- Team Building
- Internal Communications
- Internal Information Sharing

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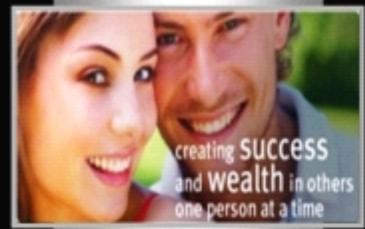
Before We Get Started

When you start your own personal or business blog, it's important to become as familiar as possible with blogs in general, their format, their tone as well as their diversity. One of the best ways to do this is to simply explore those blogs which already exist.

Reading what other businesses and individuals are doing with them will give you a first hand feel about the subject matters that are looked at and how they are presented. Try to look at a mixture of different types of blogs as well as ones in your own area of interest.

Have a Think

First, look at some questions that you have to consider before you start to put together a blog. Some of the main ones are: What will be the focus of my blog? What do I want it to achieve? Who is my target audience? These ideas will be explored in later chapters.



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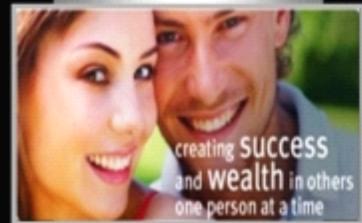
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Planning and Objectives



Planning and Objectives

As you start to plan your blog and decide how you wish to set it up, there are a number of areas that you need to evaluate to ensure that it delivers the best results for you and your business.

The answers will help you to focus your efforts in the right areas, to lay out a plan forward and ensure that the blog has the strongest possible impact in your target area.

But firstly, I should point out that you do not have to be a great writer to run a successful blog, that is not what blogs are about. If they become too honed then they can also become staid and uninteresting.

However, it does help if you enjoy writing and of course if you have something to say on the subject. However, there are some individual characteristics which I think that it is worth mentioning up front.

You should be prepared to maintain a regular posting so that the blog is kept up to date;

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You need to be prepared to share information and ideas and to be open as people will find the information if it exists, so better that they find it from you.

There will be a need to put in the time and effort to research and maintain the blog.

Be prepared to “put your head above the parapet” – if it’s a ‘me too’ blog then it is possible that it will not stand out sufficiently.

Business Objectives

When you set up a personal blog then you can talk about whatever you want and post when the urge takes you. However, if you are serious about having a business blog, then it should be viewed as a business activity with associated costs in time and money.

Consequently, it should have goals that you wish to achieve either in terms of visibility, new customers, PR value, feedback, general communications etc.



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