

8 Steps to Win at Blogging for Dollars

by Lynne Meredith Schreiber

“When Patty Briguglio took a “bone-crushing fall,” people stopped her on the street to ask how she was doing. She looked at them quizzically, wondering, “How did you know about my fall?” The answer: They read her blog.

As the head of MMI Associates, Inc., a North Carolina public relations outfit with 50 clients, Briguglio didn’t even know what a blog was when senior account executive Kipp Bodnar suggested she start one. He said blogging would be a business boon, so she did it. Briguglio and her employees upload as many as 10 posts a day to their [blog](#). The result: greater visibility and search-engine optimization. That’s what business blogging is all about – getting your business name in front of as many people as possible, as often as you can.

“It’s a way of creating a brand for yourself,” says Nancy Shenker, founder and principal of Thornwood, N.Y.-based [theONswitch](#), which guides startups and business transformations. Shenker started her company three years ago, with blogging on her own startup to-do list.

“It’s a way to express your business philosophy,” she says. “It’s about cultivating a relationship.”

Blogging puts a personal face on business in a world increasingly focused on impersonal Internet advice and e-mail. “If I can’t spend as much time with someone as I’d like,” Shenker says, the blog “creates the impetus for dialogue.

“It forces a business owner to focus on their philosophy. It’s like when you were in elementary school and the teacher said you have to write about an experience that changed your life.” Maintaining a blog keeps business owners sharp, “making them articulate on a regular basis what it is that they do. It keeps them very, very focused, very sharp and hopefully very compelling.”

Learning the Steps to Dance the Blogging Boogie

Once you decide to jump in, take these tips and use them well:

1. **Choose a host.** Bodnar says outside hosts like [TypePad](#), [WordPress](#) and [Blogger](#) are easy and cheap, “but you’re limited to storage size and features.” You get what you pay for, he says, when it comes to adding audio, video, links and content other than text.
2. **Hire a dedicated blogger.** “Find someone who’s interested in it and will oversee it,” Briguglio says.
3. **Collect links up the wazoo.** Both inbound and outbound links are vital - collect some "link karma" by directing your traffic to relevant sites, and you'll see it coming around in the form of inbound links to your blog. The more inbound links, the more traffic and visibility you get. Briguglio recently blogged about Hershey’s Kisses and linked to the Hershey site.
4. **Set up an RSS feed.** Really Simple Syndication is a code-based system that allows Web users to “subscribe” to their favorite sites – including your blog – for up-to-the-minute action and updates. On that note...
5. **Update constantly.** A blog’s success depends on the regularity of its posts. “We have so much information on our blog that we rank very high on search engines,” Bodnar says. Searches find frequently refreshed, keyword-rich sites first.
6. **Read other blogs and comment on the posts.** Get involved in the blogosphere to learn what makes a good one. A great way to start: enter “entrepreneur” at

[Technorati](#), a search engine now tracking 56 million blogs. You'll find more than 200,000 examples of how it's been done.

7. **Collect images, links, statistics and other sources to include on your blog.**

Think of it as your personal online magazine and make it as visually appealing as possible. Spend some time at a heavily stocked magazine rack and mine it for what works – and what doesn't.

It's a Wide, Wide, Web, Web World

While any company can benefit in big ways from blogging, Web businesses are especially ripe for it, says Mitch Free, CEO of “global manufacturing marketplace” MFG.com, whose [blog](#) generates a lot of user registrations for his e-comm site.

“Web businesses can seem impersonal,” Free says. “What operators really want is to form [an] emotional bond with their community.”

Mark Stevens, CEO of MSCO, a White Plains, N.Y.-based marketing firm, seconds that emotion. He says customers connect with the blogger's philosophy or personality – and trust him or her enough to do business together. Blogs, much more freeform than a proper business site, give creative license to you and your readers, allowing you to just chat, be who you are and integrate that with your business.

“One of my blogs, ‘Why Microsoft Hates Google,’ led a major technology firm to see that their traditional focus on standard media needed evaluation,” says Stevens, who updates his blog weekly.

When you get right down to it, a blog is another marketing tool. In an era of explosive Web use, it may well be the key to success. DL Byron, co-author of *Publish & Prosper*:

Blogging for Your Business (New Riders Press, 2006, \$21.99), has built blogs for Fortune 100 companies including Boeing and Intel.

“The biggest benefit is findability,” he says. “NASA, Pfizer, Merck, the U.S. Navy have all found our products via Google. We market exclusively with blogs.

“Blogs are about conversations, immediacy and frankness.”