

Chapter LII

Corporate Blogging

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ABSTRACT

The 21st century has seen revolutionary changes in online communication. Many information centers, educational institutions and business organizations are using Web logs along with other forms of communication to enhance their services. This chapter will explain corporate blogs, both its benefits and risks. It will explain with examples why blogs are important to organizations in terms of knowledge management, team management, marketing, collaboration and building customer relationship. Also it will give suggestions as to how information specialists or librarians, as information managers and disseminators of information in organizations, can assist in setting up blogs and in training the employees to learn the new communication technology.

INTRODUCTION

Modern computer technology has revolutionized communication between organizations and customers in many ways. E-mails, chat messengers, and blogs are some of the online tools that have eased and fastened the speed of information exchange, transfer and communication. “The blog is an electronic communications powerhouse that is likely to have greater impact on business communications and corporate reputations than e-mail, instant messaging, and traditional marketing-oriented Web sites combined” (Flynn, 2006,

p.4). The increase in Web logs is tremendous. When Technorati was launched a few years ago, it counted just under 13,000 blogs (Weil, 2006, p.4). David L. Sifry, founder and CEO of Technorati says “the number of blogs has been doubling about every five months since 2003” (Scoble & Israel, 2006, p.25). About 80,000 new blogs are being created daily (Flynn, 2006). At present there are more than 20 million bloggers (Flynn, 2006). “The overall growth of blogging is among the fastest of any technology in history” (Scoble & Israel, 2006, p.25).

This chapter will explore why numerous organizations have made use of this emerging trend. There are still a lot more organizations deliberating on the outcomes of joining the “blogosphere.” Although there is an increase in the number of people that are getting connected through Web logs, there are still many who raise their eyes at the mention of the word “blog” and more so at “corporate blogs.” The objective of this chapter is to explain that communication through corporate blogging is bringing in more positive results and to suggest how information specialists in corporate organizations can be helpful in fulfilling the organization’s goals by managing blogs and assisting the organization in adapting to the new communication channel.

BACKGROUND

Web logs are basically Web sites that have options to interact, post comments and provide links to other related sites, blogs and resources. A blog—short for Web blog—is a Web page that serves as an online journal and accessible to the public (Blood, 2002). Weil (2006) defines Web logs as “an easy to publish Web site. A blog is written in an informal, conversational style that tells the ‘real’ story” (p. 2). Blog entries appear in reverse chronological order and the most recent entry appears at the top. It will also show the name of the author or commenter if it is not an anonymous entry. Most Web log entries are short and date stamped. All the previous entries are archived automatically. It is updated frequently and most of the blogs have links to other sources of information. They can be accessed from anywhere in the world and at any time. If one subscribes to RSS, automatically one would get updates whenever a new blog entry or post has been made by its author.

“While early blog publishers—generally known as bloggers—were largely from the tech world, this new generation of bloggers is much more

diverse” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). Blogs became more popular ever since September 9/11 and also the presidential election of 2004 blog drew the attention of general readers to blogs (Weil, 2006). Gradually, blogs developed into social networking sites. Scoble and Israel (2006) say “it’s the first technology to enable a simple conversation to go instantly global” (p. 5). Livejournal is a socializing blog, which has attracted bloggers and readers in such great numbers. Blogs can be on any topic such as food, politics, law, health, fitness, sports, education, homeowners, homemakers, and so forth. People can easily interact through these blogs by posting their comments and providing links. Blogs are easy to create and use (Blood, 2002), and one doesn’t have to have a background in computer science. There are exclusive blog search engines such as Technorati (www.technorati.com), Bloglines (www.bloglines.com), Feedstar (www.feedstar.com), DayPop (www.daypop.com), Pubsub (www.pubsub.com), Icerocket (www.icrocket.com), and Blogpulse (www.blogpulse.com), through which bloggers and users can search for blogs on any topic. Around 15 to 20 million blogs are tracked by each search engine (Blood, 2002).

Weil (2006) highlights some important features of blogs:

- Blogs are highly interactive. If it is not interactive then it would merely be a Web site just for browsing and to get information. In blogs the visitors or readers have the option to post a comment on a blog entry and thus are able to exchange their views on a topic, event or product. Also, it leads them to other bloggers and sites of information. Gradually, a vast Web network of information sharing is formed.
- Blogs portray individuality and are written in a conversational tone. Blogs reflect the authors’ tone and voice. It is freedom of speech in the virtual space. There is no APA or any other styles to follow while

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