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6 REASONS EVERY SMALL BUSINESS SHOULD BE BLOGGING... ARE YOU MISSING THE BOAT?

I am amazed at the blog-reluctance of many small businesses. I hear things like “I don’t have time to blog”, “blogging doesn’t make sense in my industry”, and sometimes even the dreaded “what the heck is a blog?”

The reality is if your company provides unique products or services, you should be blogging. (And if your company doesn’t, you should probably consider a career change.)

Of course, the overall return on investment on a blog will vary from business to business. But there are 6 fundamental benefits to corporate blogging that should not be overlooked:

1) Gain Visibility as a Thought Leader

Each thoughtful post on your blog is a public demonstration of your thought leadership, personal integrity, humor, and professional insights. You don’t have to refute one of Einstein’s theories to get respect. For example, a summary of recent trends in your industry, or a reaction to a recent news article can be extremely effective blog posts.

2) Engage Customers in a Dialogue

If you blog using a solid blogging engine, readers will have the option to comment on each article. Folks who comment on your blog may be sales leads, or they may just challenge or support your views. Either way, comments beget comments, and you will soon be at the center of an industry-relevant dialogue with customers and partners.

3) Every Blog Article is an SEO Opportunity

The much-discussed “long tail” of search refers to highly specialized, low-traffic search terms that represent a significant amount of total searches. Translation: lots and lots of people are searching online for lots and lots of random things. You can’t realistically optimize your site for every long tail search term, but you can certainly write blog posts targeting niche keyword phrases that are likely to draw highly qualified prospects. For example, blog a reaction to a speaker in your vertical at a local tech conference. You may not draw much natural search traffic, but there is a good chance your blog will rank well very soon for searches like “vertical + conference + speaker + city”, and those visitors may be highly interested in your reaction to the speech.

4) Blogs Are Link Bait

Very few websites or bloggers will link to the “products and services” page on a corporate website. People don’t link to corporate advertisements. On the other hand, a good blog article is an industry-specific insight or a thoughtful critique. Blog articles garner links because they are interesting, informative, and not overly corporate or sales-focused. The benefit to you is that more links means better search engine rankings and more site traffic, which translates into more sales leads.

5) Humanize Your Brand

Blogs offer an opportunity for a company to present its insightful, helpful, thoughtful side. Through a blog, prospects will get a sense of your company’s people, culture, and vision. Blogs are an opportunity to provide a less antiseptic view of your company that is more personal and less “corporate”. Blogs can

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humanize your brand.

6) In Google, Fresher Content = Better Website

Google will periodically crawl websites looking for new and updated content. In general, it is better to have Google crawl your site as often as possible. Sites that get crawled more often have more frequent updates and more authority. Blogging consistently ensures there will be fresh content on your site.

Despite these reasons why companies should be blogging, the same 2 objections surface time and time again:

1) I Don't Have Time to Blog

The truth is you don't have time ***NOT*** to blog. You probably already write blog articles, you just don't call them that. Blogs are the new email newsletters. Most anything that could go in your newsletter can go in your blog. You can still send the content out via email, and readers can subscribe to your blog to get posts via email.

Portions of white papers can also make excellent blog articles. But a blog is better than a newsletter or a white paper because readers can join the debate and be positioned to respond to other "calls to action" you may place adjacent to or within posts. In addition, readers will be able to navigate your blog to read older articles that would otherwise be in a deleted newsletter or white paper. Best of all, each blog article you post will provide lasting benefit because it is a web page that can be optimized, indexed, and drawing natural search traffic for you ad infinitum.

In addition, quality blogging engines can support multiple authors, so more than one leader in your organization can post articles. This takes the pressure off any one individual. And remember that a good blog post might just draw a parallel between two or three recent articles, or suggest an explanation for a puzzling industry phenomenon. A good article doesn't have to be a PhD thesis.

2) What if My Customers Actually Find Out What I'm Thinking?

Some professionals don't like the idea of blogging because it means relinquishing control over some elements of the corporate brand. A blog is less formal than a press release or an official marketing message, and the comments left by readers cannot be predicted. The point here is... too bad! In today's world, consumers have access to thousands of opinions about your brand, and thousands of articles, commentaries, product reviews, etc. that will certainly impact the buying decision. The idea that you can control exactly how your brand will be perceived or keep consumers in the dark is outdated. The truth is your best option is to engage customers in an honest, open dialogue. Be confident that transparency is the best policy, and customers will reward your candor.

In closing, get out there and blog!