



## Using Blogs To Attract Attention (Without Having Your Own)

By Elge Premeau

There is a common misperception that the only way to use blogs to attract clients is to have your own blog.

But having your own blog is hard work. That is probably why 60% of bloggers have not updated their blogs in the last 60 days. New bloggers get excited, start a blog, add entries for a few weeks, and, once the excitement wears off, blogging becomes one more thing to feel guilty about not doing as often as you should.

One of the biggest reasons why people stop blogging is that they realize they are essentially talking to themselves. Writing the blog is the easy part. The hard part is getting people to read yours.

In order to attract readers, you have to market your blog just as you do with your website and newsletter.

So, why not tap into the audiences other blogs attract and participate in the blogosphere without doing the hard work of creating and marketing a blog?

An effective blog is essentially an online discussion, and what makes a blog different from a newsletter is the ability for anyone to comment on what they've read, thus creating a dynamic online conversation.

A blog that creates and encourages conversation is more likely to engage readers and make them come back in the future. As a result, most bloggers would love for you to comment on what they've written.

It's a win-win situation. They have a more interesting blog and you get to get in front of a new audience.

### How To Find Blogs To Comment On

In order to get in front of your target market, you have to think like them. Start by asking yourself, "Where does my target market hang out on the internet?" Put yourself in your prospect's place and ask yourself the following questions:

- What are they looking for?
- What do they care about?
- What professional organizations do they belong to?
- Are there any stories in the press that affect their industry?
- What publications do they read?

Once you've answered these questions and created a list of topics they tend to be interested in, it's time to find some blogs. There are several ways to do this. It's a good idea to start with blog directories and see where they take you.

### Blog Directories

The Open Directory Project, the largest human-edited directory of the internet has a comprehensive list of blog directories. This list of lists will give you more than enough blog directories to search. Some of the major blog directories include Technorati, Blogarama and Blog Catalog.

### Blog Rolls

Once you find an especially pertinent blog, check out their blog roll for more ideas. A blog roll is a list of other blogs this blog owner recommends. They are typically displayed in the left or right hand column.

## Google Alerts

You can also use Google Alerts to find blogs, track a rapidly evolving news stories, and research a specific topic. To use it, you enter and save phrases or topics you want to know about, and it emails you each time it finds new mentions of them on the Internet. You can set it to search websites, news and blogs and to email you daily, or weekly as a compilation.

## Magazines & Newspapers

Many magazines—especially business magazines—have blogs associated with their websites. Fast Company has pioneered the use of blogging in tandem with their magazine and is an excellent place to start if you're looking for business blogs. (Be sure to check out their blog roll in the left column.) If you're looking for blogs focused on a particular region of the country, try newspaper websites.

## How To Keep Track Of Blogs

At this point you might be thinking, "Yeah, right. Like I'm going to remember to check on all these blogs every few days." There's a solution to that! This is where a blog aggregator comes in handy.

A blog aggregator (also known as a news aggregator) allows you to keep track of all the blogs you want to read in one place. Maybe you've heard about RSS which stand for "really simple syndication" and wondered what it had to do with blogging. RSS is the technology built into blogs to notify you of blog updates via email.

One of the most popular blog aggregators is Bloglines. Bloglines is a free web based aggregator you can access from any computer with an internet connection. When you find a blog you like, log into Bloglines and add it to your list. Bloglines will then check those blogs for new posts and will add them to your Bloglines personal page.

Check your blog aggregator at least a couple of times a week or so and see if any of the recent posts by other Bloggers catch your eye and inspire you to participate in the conversation.

## Blog Commenting Basics

When you find a blog post that you want to comment on, treat it as if you were at a face-to-face networking event. You wouldn't walk into a chamber of commerce meeting and start yelling at the top of your voice, "This is my business and I can help you!" Don't do it in cyberspace either. Be professional and helpful. Your primary goal should be to give pertinent advice that shows the reader you know what you're talking about.

Keep in mind that most blogs are set up so that the moderator needs to approve your post before it's viewable to other readers. Be careful about how you bring up your business name or website. If you appear to be blatantly marketing yourself, your comment won't be added. And, rest assured, quality comments sell themselves.

If you've written something that resonates with another reader, they will put a little effort into finding you. However, you can do a few things to make it easier for them to find you.

Most blogs ask you for your name, email address and website when you add a comment. Blogs typically don't display your email address. That way spammers can't grab it. It also mean you will want to help people find you by entering full name and not a nick name.

Many blogs have a field for your domain name when you register with them to post a comment. If you add your domain name, they will link your name to your website. These links to your website can have the added benefit of improving your website's rankings in the search engines.

An appropriate way to refer to your website would be to suggest people go there to learn more about a topic. If you've built a database of articles on your website, you could say something like, "I've written an article that addresses that problem. You can find it at (put link here)."

Once you've commented on a blog, be sure to check back within a few days. Someone might have asked for clarification or even asked you to contact them.

Will commenting on other blogs bring you new clients? It might, but probably not. However, there are other real benefits that make it a worthwhile marketing activity.

- It's a great way to test the waters and see if you are ready to start your own blog.
- If you do start your own blog, you will be a lot clearer on what topics you want to write about.

- You will learn which blogs get read, have interesting content and are worth keeping track of.
- You can improve your own website's rankings with links from blogs.
- You can improve the ROI of your other lead generation activates including your website, newsletter, white papers and articles.
- If you decide blogging isn't a good fit for your company, no one has to be the wiser.

Lastly, RainToday's recent report "What's Working in Lead Generation" demonstrates that participating in others' blogs is considered a "less effective" and "less popular" method of lead generation overall, but is considered a "more effective" and "less popular" method of lead generation for companies that are considered "excellent" at lead generation.

A potential explanation for this difference is that companies that are excellent at lead generation implement multiple marketing tactics instead of relying on just a few marketing tactics.

Considering these results, commenting on others' blogs should be one of the many marketing tactics you use.

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