



HOW TO START BLOGGING:

A GUIDE FOR BUSINESS BLOGGERS

An e-book from **iCrossing**

V 1.0 UPDATED 01.05.09

IMAGE: WEB
BY: SOZESOZE
[HTTP://WWW.FLICKR.COM/PHOTOS/31941059@N00/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/31941059@N00/)

icrossing.co.uk/ebooks >

FOREWORD

Welcome to our third iCrossing UK e-book, *How to Start Blogging*.

This is not a definitive guide to the topic of blogging. It has been adapted from briefings, guides and notes we created specifically to help individuals at our client organisations who were starting to blog.

It's all about helping you to start blogging. Once you do, and have been blogging for a little while, hopefully you will find your own reasons to carry on.

Last time we counted there were forty odd blogs run by iCrossing people in the UK. Only a few of those are about work specifically - the topics range through dance music, X Box gaming, journalism and whatever else takes people's interest at a given moment. Some of them are popular, some of them are read by a few mates of the author, and a couple even make a few quid from running ads on them.

Our internal LORE blog and **Connect**, our public blog, are important parts of the way that we work, and have become part of the culture of our company.

I think of my personal blog as my public notebook, and I've learned massive amounts about all sorts of things from writing on it and starting conversations online with other bloggers. It is hard for me to express or quantify the significant value - personally and professionally - that blogging gives me.

If you liked this e-book, take a look at *What is Social Media?* and *Brands in Networks*, both available for free download from icrossing.co.uk/ebooks.

Antony Mayfield
Head of social media, iCrossing
Brighton, May 2009



CONTENTS	3 >
INTRODUCTION	4 >
WHY BLOG?	7 >
THE BLOGGING WORK - FLOW	11 >
SOME USEFUL FORMATS FOR BLOG POSTS	12 >
HANDS OFF VERSUS HANDS ON	13 >
TO MODERATE OR NOT TO MODERATE	13 >
WHICH BLOGGING PLATFORM TO USE?	15 >
USEFUL TOOLS TO AID BLOGGING	19 >
RECOMMENDED READING	22 >
ABOUT THE AUTHORS	24 >
ABOUT ICROSSING	25 >
CREATIVE COMMONS COPYRIGHT	26 >



INTRODUCTION

This e-book offers a straightforward, jargon-free (well as little as possible) guide to getting started with business blogging – and how to really enjoy it.

It includes:

- Links to useful websites and tools that will support your blogging
- Guidance on the different levels of involvement you can have with your blog – and a discussion about the pros and cons of each

Notes about the technology you will need are marked **///...///** for your reference.

There are a few golden rules of blogging that it's worth stating right here at the outset. You don't have to be techie to be a blogger but you do have to understand the basic principles of the environment.

SO REMEMBER

- 1 There's no point having a blog if you aren't going to write it yourself. By all means, write your posts up in a Moleskine notebook with an old-fashioned fountain pen first. You may even go so far as to get an assistant to type your thoughts up, and perhaps upload them to your blog. But if the original words didn't come from your mind to the screen, then it isn't your blog – it's someone else's. And fakery goes down particularly badly in the blogosphere.
- 2 The whole point of blogging is to start or participate in a conversation. If you're blogging well, people will want to respond to what you say, and talk to you about your thoughts. A comments section is a pre-requisite for any blog. So consider how you will manage the conversation – will you moderate comments? Will you get someone else to moderate on your behalf? Or will you let discussion happen without moderation? There are pluses and minuses to each approach.
- 3 In cyberspace, nothing ever really gets deleted. Once you commit words to a blog, you create what is essentially a permanent record of your thoughts. Even if you delete your own blog, others will have read it, and often, will quote you on their own blogs and in their other social spaces. You can't control this. So be sure to think about this before you press the 'publish' button.



TECHNICAL REQUESTS

Most of the **technical requests** in this e-book are about making sure you have access to various websites and services. But there are also some software and hardware recommendations that will help you blog more easily:

- Broadband at your home that you can access with a laptop
- A 3G dongle so that you can write your own blog, or read other people's blogs while you are on the move with your laptop
- A mobile device that allows web access for reading news feeds on the move (an iPhone, Blackberry or Pocket PC would be ideal)
- If you are a Windows user copy of Microsoft OneNote (part of the last two most recent releases of Microsoft Office)
- If you don't like making notes on a laptop or mobile device, make sure you have a small, robust notebook with you at all times – a Moleskine is perfect – so when you see something that you'd like to talk about on your blog, you can make a note of it



Writing is thinking on paper.
--William Zinisser

It was obvious from the start that it was revolutionary. Every
writer since the printing press has longed for a means to
publish himself and reach—instantly—any reader on Earth....
--Andrew Sullivan



WHY BLOG?

WHY SHOULD YOU BLOG?

We could start with the same old reason to start blogging in business: attention. Attention for your company, reach for your brand, traffic for your website, Google-juice to boost your search rankings.

Or we could start where it matters. Start with you.

You see, the attention is an outcome, something that might happen if things go particularly well with your blog. But it might not happen.

The only way a blog ever becomes successful, is if a real person is writing it - writing it for themselves, for people they like, and about things that are interesting to them.

So to help you start blogging, which is what this e-book is all about, we'd better start with some good reasons for starting, rather than distant outcomes and impersonal statistics.

Here are the best reasons we can think of for blogging:

SOMEWHERE TO THINK

Surprisingly perhaps, blogging is a great way of managing information overload. We emphasise reading, consuming information in the way that we work - newspapers, trade journals, magazines, reports all come flying our way. Some we read, some we skim, some we bin or file with good intentions for reading later.

Taking a small amount of time out of your day or week to blog means choosing something that you think is important, and thinking about it for long enough to put together a few sentences. Rather than being a chore, blogging can create that oasis of thinking space that so many of us long for. The routine, the discipline, of committing to even just one blog post or two a week can have a big effect.

SHARING THINGS

"I'll send you a link" must be as common a way of ending a conversation with a colleague, client or contact as "I'll call you" used to be.

And, via email, IM and Twitter, the links duly fly - sometimes to be read briefly, sometimes to end up in a pile of things we never get to read.

Putting things that are interesting to you and that you think may be interesting to colleagues - be it a book, an article, a website - on to a blog is an incredibly effective way of sharing links. People can take a look at whatever it is when it suits them, rather than it falling victim to the daily cull of emails that aren't urgent or important. They can see what you think about them, and add a comment to say what they think.

Even better than that, people you might not have thought to send the interesting thing to, or that you had no idea would find it interesting, can also find the link and let you know what they think about it.

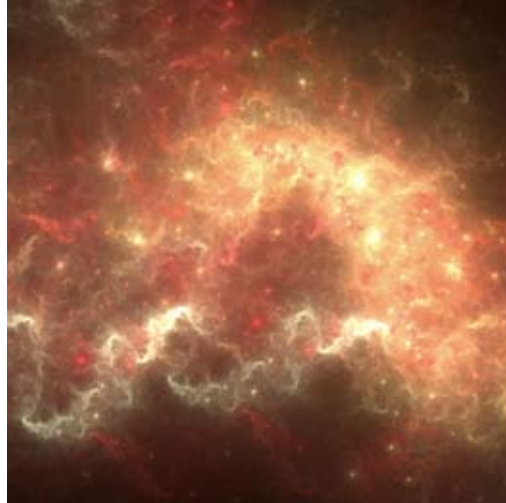


CONNECTING TO YOUR NETWORK

When you start posting things you find interesting, and thoughts about what you've been doing or reading online, people will begin to find you - people who are interested in the same things - your industry, your brand in particular, or simply themes like innovation or management that you touch on.

Some people will leave comments, some may Twitter or blog a link to something you have written or said. You will also be linking (see the section below on writing posts) to other people's websites and blogs. At this point you have literally become part of your online network, present on the web, indexed by Google and adding value to that network too.

Online networks, social networks are exactly like our personal and professional networks. When we grow them, add to them with our thoughts, ideas and connections, they bring value to us in all sorts of ways.



LISTENING

Web entrepreneur Loic Le Meur once said "[If the news is important it will find me.](#)" What he meant was that as a "hyper-connected" individual, who blogs, Twitters, reads his news through an RSS reader, he can count on his network to effectively flag when something important is happening.

Blogging can help you create a work-flow and a network that will help you to hear about new developments in your industry and elsewhere that will be useful to you. It literally helps you to be more connected to what is happening around you.

So back to the reasons that some may put to you for blogging, perhaps the reason that the marketing or PR department is asking you to blog in the first place: attention, in its various digital forms.

The attention may come if your blog starts to work. If you're being useful, to yourself and others, you will start to connect.



Douglas Adam's comedy sci-fi classic,
The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy
has a passage which describes
the art of flying.

The nub of it is this:

~~“There is an art, it says, or rather, a knack to flying.~~

**~~The knack lies in learning how to throw yourself at
the ground and miss.~~**



Pick a nice day, [the Guide] suggests, and try it.”

That last line is about the best advice on how to blog that there is...



THE BLOGGING WORK-FLOW: FEEDING YOUR BLOG HABIT

Blogging is time-consuming. Even if you have a dedicated assistant who will post your words and moderate comments and feedback, it still takes time and thought to put together a good blog post. The best way to approach it is to try to integrate it with your working day or your weekly routine. Things you might have noted to yourself, clippings you might have taken, websites you might have bookmarked or sent to colleagues by email, and even great epiphanies you might have had in the shower; all might be posted to your blog.

Think of blog writing as a four-stage process. Sometimes you will be able to do them all at once – especially if there is something you want to post quickly – but otherwise you can spend a little time here and there on each of the stages:

Reading: The best bloggers read a lot – it's where they find the material to inspire their own posts. A really efficient way of organising your online reading material is to use a feed organiser (see Blog Reader below). If you are not a big reader of online content, then try to keep your reading as broad and wide-ranging as you can. You never know when you might stumble across a good article or book that's going to get your blogging-sensor tingling.

Collecting: Once you've found something that you think may be good to write about you need to save it somewhere. Microsoft OneNote is ideal for this if you're a laptop kind of person. But a good real world notebook will do just as well if this is what suits your habits better.

Writing: If you are blogging in a corporate or official capacity, most of your blog posts should be very concise: somewhere between 50 and 150 words. If you feel your thoughts on a subject can't be contained to that, think about drafting an article for the website or for one of your other corporate publications, and then you can link to it with some further thoughts on your blog when it is published. If you are blogging in a more personal capacity, then you have more licence to be freewheeling with your thoughts. But, unless you write like Stephen Fry, it's unlikely that anyone will be keen to read a blog post of more than 1,500 words on a regular basis.

Editing and publishing: Once you've written your post it makes good sense to re-read and proofread it. If you're unsure, or need a sanity-check, show it to someone else whose opinion you trust before you publish. Don't forget to double-check that you've included links to other websites from words in your text where it would be useful to do so.

If you are relying on a colleague or assistant to do the technical side of posting your blog entry, be sure to have made it clear where you want links to go in your site, and that the web site addresses you have provided work. It is also important that you have an agreed process and time-scale with them. Many blog entries will need to be posted swiftly to ensure that they are timely and topical. Your 'editor' will need to be able to ensure that they are able to do this speedily on your behalf. They will also need to check that all links on your post work properly, and, if necessary, re-edit the post to fix broken ones. This should happen as soon as the post is published. It looks sloppy and unprofessional to have typos and broken links on a blog.

SOME USEFUL FORMATS FOR BLOG POSTS

Here are a number of different types of blog posts that might help you to think of something to blog about:

Short advice pieces: a quick tip or guide to something can be very useful to your readers: if you have specialist knowledge that they don't, give them a digestible précis of a topic which will help to get them started on the road to enlightenment. For example, Seth Godin's [Advice for real estate agents](#) (quit now!).

Top five, top tens, top anythings: Lists of things make for really strong posts and can help structure your thoughts in a hurry. Think "five most important things when . . ." or "seven myths about . . ." or "ten ways to get . . ." - for example, the hugely successful [Top Ten Mistakes in Web Design](#).

Useful links: If you find a website or a news story you think is interesting, don't be afraid to simply post this with a sentence or two about why you like it. Some influential blogs aggregate links on a regular basis too, (for example, the Guardian's [PDA Newsbucket](#)).

Round-up: After a busy news day it can be an interesting exercise to link to a few of the journalists and bloggers who have taken different angles on the same story.

Opinions: You don't have to rant to use opinion on your blog. If you are writing a corporate blog, it may be better to raise questions than to make outspoken assertions. This may also encourage readers to comment.

However, if you have a mandate to be honest and to speak in a personal capacity on your blog, and you feel very strongly about a particular issue, by all means, say what you think. Just keep in mind that the more opinionated your blog, the more likely it is that your readers will disagree. You need to be prepared to handle criticism and debate in your comments section. Don't feel afraid of this – a blog isn't truly alive until there's been a good argument in its comments section.

A responsible blogger will always check their sources. Remember that the law – and basic good manners – require you not to libel or defame any one else. You can [read the BBC's guide to avoiding libel here](#).

Scoop: Despite the thousands of news sources in the world, it's not impossible to come across a story no one else has seen. If you think it might be a scoop, post it.



BLOG ETIQUETTE

Amending and deleting published posts

Don't delete or amend posts without making it clear where the changes are. This makes it less confusing for people who may be reading an original post in their news reader before clicking through to your blog. Generally the best way to mark changes is to add "UPDATED" or "AMENDED" in bold at the head of the post and then to change the font of text you want to remove to strike-through. Add new text in bold or after an "update" header.

Never blog in anger

Remember that anything your blog is effectively on the permanent record of both you and your company. Even if you were to delete a post it could still be visible in the "Google cache" or via someone else's blog reader. If you're unsure about the wisdom of publishing something, run it by someone you trust or come back to it later.

Always link to your sources

Not only is it polite to note the blog or news source you get a story from, it increases your "connectedness" in the community of interest around a given subject.

HANDS-OFF VERSUS HANDS-ON

As we said above, it's one of the basic rules of blogging that you need to actually write your blog entries yourself.

However, it may be impractical for you to manage the production and editing of your blog – perhaps you're on the road a lot, or just not very interested in the physical process of getting your words on to the screen! In which case, using a friend or colleague to act as your 'blog editor' might be a sensible approach.

Remember, your blog editor is not going to write your blog posts for you. But, they will be able to post the text you write to your blog, add pictures, illustrations and links to relevant further reading, check your spelling and perhaps even offer advice on topics for you to blog about.

If you do use a blog editor, you should let your readers know – and especially draw their attention to the fact that any responses to your blogs from them will almost certainly be seen by your blog editor as well as you. It's just good manners to acknowledge the way your blog writing works.

TO MODERATE OR NOT TO MODERATE

Opinion about whether you should moderate your readers' comments varies wildly. There are those who feel that in a social space like a blog, anything goes – that freedom of speech is paramount. For others, especially those who are publishing a 'corporate blog', or who represent the views of an organisation or of a group of people, moderation is an essential part of blogging.

REASONS WHY YOU NEED TO THINK ABOUT HOW YOU WILL MANAGE COMMENTS ON YOUR BLOG:

A blog is nothing without the comments, views, suggestions and feedback of its readers.

Just as certain is the fact that not everyone in the world will agree with your views, whatever they are, and so blogging always leaves open the possibility that you will get feedback strongly disagreeing with what you've had to say. It's also possible that someone might want to use your blog to commit a random act of "virtual graffiti" – leaving an offensive, abusive or plain nonsensical message. Or selling or promoting something without your permission.

If you don't have some form of moderation on your blog, all such messages will be published directly to your blog without you (or your blog editor) seeing them first. It's very easy to remove unwanted messages from a blog's comment stream – but if you feel that you or your organisation's reputation might be damaged by unwanted comments being published (however briefly) on your blog, then you should seriously consider some form of moderation.

You should be aware that, for the purposes of libel law, a blog or other web page is a form of publication. As with other publishers, you may be held legally liable for the content you publish, whether or not you wrote it.

DIFFERENT FORMS OF MODERATION

Moderation itself can vary. You could opt for the basic functionality of insisting that a person who leaves a comment must supply you with their name and email address before their comment can be published. This can be enough to deter many mischief makers. However, it's simple enough to create an anonymous email address, so it's hardly fool-proof.

A more effective, but time-consuming, moderation process involves messages being stored, unpublished, in a queue waiting for you or your blog editor to publish or reject them as you see fit. This ensures that nothing appears in your comments section that hasn't first been approved by you. The notion of "being a blog moderator" can seem daunting. But the reality is that even the most popular blogs have no more than a few tens of comments each day, and the vast majority of these can be published unedited with a single click.

EXPLAIN WHAT IS ACCEPTABLE ON YOUR BLOG AND WHAT ISN'T

Since your blog is a two-way conversation, the opportunity to read the feedback from your readers via a moderation queue can be an effective way of understanding how the conversation is going and responding in return to the feedback you've had.

If you do opt for moderation – or even if you don't – you should give your readers a thorough understanding of what kind of comments you will find acceptable, and what kinds of comments are liable to go unpublished, be edited or removed if they are submitted to your blog. A basic "code of conduct" for your blog will work very well if you are operating in a corporate environment.

WHICH BLOGGING PLATFORM SHOULD YOU USE?

There are some important issues to think through when choosing a blog platform:

- Should you use a free blog, or host your own blog on your own domain?
- What are the pros and cons of each blogging platform?
- Which should you use?
- Should you start out on a free blogging platform and upgrade later?

What follows is an attempt to flesh out some of the factors new bloggers might like to consider in deciding on a blog platform. It is informed by iCrossing's own experiences of blogging, and based on an analysis of the blogosphere that takes into account important resources.

TAKE YOUR TIME AND THINK THINGS THROUGH.

There are many competing blog platforms on the market. While you can change your blog platform at a later time (many of them offer ways to import and export your content) there are usually some costs associated with such transfers. Also, changing from a free hosted blog service to a self-hosted one means changing your domain, which has implications on search engine traffic.

You need to ask yourself a few key questions to help you make the decision.

What are your blogging goals? - Probably the most important thing to do when starting the process of choosing a blog platform is to consider your aspirations for your blog.

What's your budget? – You can blog for free, but you might want to pay for added features. Different blogging platforms offer different levels of service. Some, like Blogger.com and WordPress.com, offer the platform for free and will host your blog. But if you want more flexibility (space, control of your web address, professional features) you'll need to pay a little more – typically no more than a few pounds a month.

How 'techie' are you? - How much technological knowledge is available to you and your team? One of the great things about blogging is that there is a wonderful hive of communal knowledge available to you and many forums dedicated to helping people get the most out of their chosen platforms. If you've got the time, the expertise is there for you to draw on – if you haven't, keep it simple.

What blog platforms are others using? – When it comes to choosing a platform, take a look at what your peers and competitors are using.

Here's a round up of the key blogging hosts and software platforms, arranged alphabetically:

BLOGGER

Blogger is a free, hosted blogging tool. It's one of the oldest blogging services around and today has millions of users.

+ Pros:

- Fast set-up
- Simple
- Free
- Impressive array of features
- Attractive template "skins" to choose from
- The Audioblogger service. By programming the Audioblogger number into a phone, users can put audio recordings on their blog by simply calling the number and recording themselves. At the time of writing, this service was unique among blog software packages
- Allows users to use FTP (file transfer protocol) to transfer files generated for their blog to their own web site. Used together with customization of the Blogger template, this unusual functionality means that readers may never realise that a website is using Blogger
- Makes it possible to have a personal domain name, rather than the generic Blogger URL 'XXXX.blogspot.com'

- Cons:

The biggest hole in Blogger's platform is the lack of post categorisation.

You need to know HTML to make custom changes to the templates provided.

Unlike some of the more complex hosted services, Blogger doesn't make customisation easy.

Very few professional bloggers stick with Blogger for very long, if they even start there. Because it is so simple, and perhaps because it is free, most professional bloggers choose to use blogging software that has more 'prestige'. However, it is an ideal tool to use when first beginning, especially for running a test blog for a couple of weeks before devoting any serious time or money to it.

BLOGWARE

Blogware is a hosted blogging platform that can be difficult to customise, even for an experienced HTML user. However, it also provides a fair number of options within the administration interface to let you set up layouts and styles without getting into the templates.

Purchasing a Blogware blog is different to most other packages; you must buy Blogware through a reseller, so prices and packages will vary. Like Blogger, Blogware lets you upload files via FTP to the server where your blog is hosted. If you're looking to create a website that has a few non-blog pages, this is especially helpful.

MOVABLE TYPE

Movable Type, a self-hosted platform created by Six Apart, is one of the best known blogging software tools. This system is powerful, but not simple to install or use.

+ Pros

As a blogging tool alone, Movable Type has nearly every feature you might want, and continues to add more:

- Many of its users are highly technical, and have created additional [plug-ins](#) that can be added to the standard installation
- Movable Type recently announced that it has gone free/open-source, relicensing its code under the [GPL](#) free licence
- The paid licence entitles you to support and discounts on future upgrades

- Cons

- The most common complaint concerns the need to rebuild your blog whenever you make a change to a template, a configuration setting, or add a new category
- For the non-technically inclined, installation of this software can be quite a challenge. You should not attempt it all if you aren't already comfortable with uploading and downloading files to a web server. There are several web hosts that offer Movable Type installation as part of their package of services

TYPEPAD

Typepad is a hosted blog platform. Its pricing scheme and features are divided into three levels:

1. Basic
2. Plus
3. Pro

Design customisation is extremely limited at the Basic level, and only fully accessible at the Pro level. If you want to run a group blog, or give different users different levels of access, you must go with the Pro account.

At all account levels, Typepad has a built-in feature called Typelists that allows you to build lists that associate each item with a URL. These lists can be added easily to the left- or right-hand column of your blog – no need to touch the templates – which is particularly useful for showing your current reading list, links to other sites (blogroll), or links to new stories.

Typepad is a good option for users who want to get started quickly but still want all the more advanced features. Customisation is possible, but complicated, so it's also a good option for those who just want a blog that works without fussing too much over how it looks. However, Typepad Plus and Pro do a better job than most blog software at allowing you to choose layout options without having to fiddle about with the templates.

WORDPRESS

WordPress first launched in 2003 and has grown to be the largest blogging tool in the world, used on hundreds of thousands of sites and seen by tens of millions of people every day. It's available free from www.wordpress.org as software for self-hosted blogs, or from www.wordpress.com as a free, hosted package.

+ Pros

- You can manage static pages. This allows content pages to be created and managed outside the normal blog chronology - a step away from being simple blog management software towards becoming a full content management system
- A simple template/theme system, which allows users to easily activate and deactivate "skins" for their sites
- WordPress is equipped with a default template ("Kubrick") designed by [Michael Heilemann](#).
- Straightforward editing and image uploading, fast posting, and a reliable auto-save (handy when you lose your internet connection on the move – a problem also tackled by a new feature called [Gears](#))
- A new wiki-like 'version history' feature, that allows you to track changes made to any page and restore previous versions if required
- Easy use of widgets and [RSS feeds](#), to move streams of content around your site and allows others to subscribe to your content easily
- A good system for categories and tags
- Easy notification of updates

- Cons

- You're responsible for dealing with spam
- Limited customisation of themes (though more are being added)
- You can't hack the code behind your blog



USEFUL TOOLS TO AID YOUR BLOGGING

BLOG READERS

It is important to build up a strong reading list of blogs and news sources. The fastest way to do this is with a blog reader (sometimes called a news reader), which is a tool that allows you to subscribe to and organise **RSS feeds** – whether they're from a blog, a news source or anywhere else.

Popular aggregation tools are **iGoogle**, **Netvibes** and **Bloglines**. You can even use the latest version of **Microsoft Outlook**, which allows you to read posts when you're not connected to the web.

Google Reader is very popular, and has a highly convenient mobile version. When you are using the browser on your mobile device enter the address. The **mobile version** will display the stories in the order of the most recently received. As you find any that may be of interest for your blog or that you want to save for future reference you can click the "Add Star" link. When you return to your Google Reader desktop version you'll be able to see these in your "Starred Items" folder.

WEB BROWSERS

Make sure you have either the latest version of Microsoft Windows Explorer, **Firefox** or **Google Chrome**. These all allow 'tabbed browsing', without the need to open multiple windows, which saves time when you're reviewing news and blog posts across more than one site. Firefox also has a few add-ons which are very helpful to bloggers.

Action: Ensure that you have a tabbed browser

///TECHNOLOGY: APPROVE FIREFOX BROWSER DOWNLOAD///



BLOG SEARCH ENGINE

Technorati is a blog search engine – an easy way of finding blogs that are useful to you. This can help you find others who are blogging about the same topics, and provide a source of inspiration when you're considering a new subject.

When you find a useful-looking blog, you can view that blog's profile on Technorati to find out how many other blogs links to it. This is used to give the blog a measure of its "authority" in the blogosphere.

Once your blog is live, it's very simple to **register it with Technorati**. Keep an eye on Technorati references to your blog and you'll see who's writing about you.

You can also create "Watchlists" on Technorati, based on a topic, website address or "tag" that you want to monitor – very helpful if you're researching a blog post on a particular topic.

Action: Register for a Technorati account.

///TECHNOLOGY: ENSURE THIS SITE IS NOT BLOCKED BY THE FIREWALL///

ONLINE BOOKMARKING



Delicious.com

The premier online bookmarking service. At its simplest, it can replace and improve upon your “favourites” folder in your browser - but more than this, it can also help you share your finds with other people, and discover what others have found.

You'll need to [register](#) to get a Delicious account.

Once you have a Delicious account you can download an [add-on for your Firefox browser](#) (or for [Explorer](#)) which will make it easy to use with [the single click of a button](#).

Action: Register for a Delicious account.

///TECHNOLOGY: ENSURE THIS SITE IS NOT BLOCKED BY THE FIREWALL///



Wikipedia

It hardly needs an introduction, but Wikipedia is fantastically useful as a research and reference tool for bloggers.

The joy of [hyperlinking](#) is that you can easily help your readers find out more about certain ideas and terms without having to either dumb-down or over-complicate your blog posts. For many terms (particularly those that are technical or new) Wikipedia has the best and most accessible explanation.

///TECHNOLOGY: ENSURE THIS SITE IS NOT BLOCKED BY THE FIREWALL///



OneNote

Microsoft's OneNote is a very useful tool for blogging: it lets you cut and paste text from websites and will automatically append it with a URL. This is handy when you want to clip text from blogs and news sites that you would like to blog about later.

OneNote is also useful for capturing images to paste into your blog posts. To do this, press the Windows key and the 'S' key together, and then select the part of the screen you want to insert in the text.

///TECHNOLOGY: INSTALL ONENOTE///

TAGS

It's good practice to use tags – words that describe the subjects you're blogging about. They help your blog posts to be found quickly by other bloggers and search engines.

Two or three tags per post are usually enough – think about how you would categorise what you've written about, and then be consistent about tagging posts on a continuing topic or theme in the same way so readers can follow your thoughts easily.



TWITTER

At the time of writing all the buzz in the world of social media seems to be about Twitter. We won't go into detail here about how to use Twitter - that deserves a book of its own - but suffice to say that maintaining a profile in Twitter is a very useful thing to do as part of your blogging.

First up, creating a Twitter profile and following people you're interested in (especially bloggers you're reading) can help find interesting things to blog about. Many people also post links to their new blog posts as well, though some think you shouldn't do this too often as it starts to look like spam. You might think of Twitter as a great place to post links or short thoughts that you don't have time to turn into blog posts.

FACEBOOK, LINKEDIN AND OTHER SOCIAL NETWORKS

If you belong to any social networks, you might like to set up an automatic feed to them from your blog. It's often very simple to do - for instance, by signing up for the Wordpress application in Facebook or the Wordpress / BlogLink (for Typepad) applications if your blog is on those platforms in LinkedIn. Once you've set these up, headlines from your blog posts will be published on your profile and be visible to friends and contacts.



RECOMMENDED READING

The following extracts are from a couple of useful articles about blogging:

Farhad Manjoo: [How to Blog](#)
Web mag Slate's technology editor has some sound advice on blogging, including:

"Don't worry if your posts suck a little. Unless you're Jeffrey Goldberg, your first blog post is unlikely to be perfect. Indeed, a lot of your posts aren't going to be as great as they could be if you spent many hours on them—and that's OK. Felix Salmon, who writes Portfolio's excellent finance blog Market Movers, puts it this way: "Quantity is more important than quality. Don't be scared of being wrong, or inelegant; you have much less of an idea what your readers are going to like than you possibly imagine. So jump right in, put yourself out there."

Nearly every blogger I spoke to agreed with this sentiment. If you're trying to gain an audience, you can't afford to worry over every sentence as if it were ... see, I was going to spend 15 minutes thinking of a hilarious and deeply insightful simile there, but, damn it, I'm in blogging mode and need to move on.

"Write casually but clearly. This one flows from the last two—the best way to stick to a blogging schedule is to write quickly, and a good way to write quickly is to write as if you're talking to a friend. Marc Ambinder, the political-news maven at the Atlantic, told me, "I've found that I tend to write the way I speak. Short, staccato sentences, lots of parentheticals. That annoys purists, but it's uniquely my own voice, and I think it helps to build a connection with the reader."

Also remember that your readers want you to get to the point. "Be clear, not cryptic," Salmon says. "Blog readers have neither the time nor the inclination to read between the lines; blogs aren't literature."

Seth Godin: [How to get traffic for your blog](#)
Seth's full post contains 50 tips on blogging:

"My friend Fred, a talented blogger, asked me for advice the other day. Here's a partial answer, with a few apologies to [Swift](#):

- 1 Use lists.
- 2 Be topical... write posts that need to be read right now.
- 3 Learn enough to become the expert in your field.
- 4 [Break news](#)...

...55 Don't be boring.

56 Write stuff that people want to read and share."

(Seth Godin, June 03, 2006)



**Performancing.com: [How To Blog Like Om Malik](#)
Raj's full post contains further points, and expands on each.**

"Om Malik of [GigaOm](#)... is informed and he gives credit to his sources. Aside from his hot scoops, he's the rare blogger that can take the lowly 'summary' post and transform it into something worth reading..."

Here are a few tips for you to blog like OmMalik (just my estimation, feel to comment/disagree):

- Know your topic, be your topic...
- Present different viewpoints...

Of course, to actually power blog, you need good tools. Here are a few:

- A good web browser...
- A good blogging editor...
- Feed subscriptions...
- Ability to write...

([Raj Dash](#), January 28, 2007)

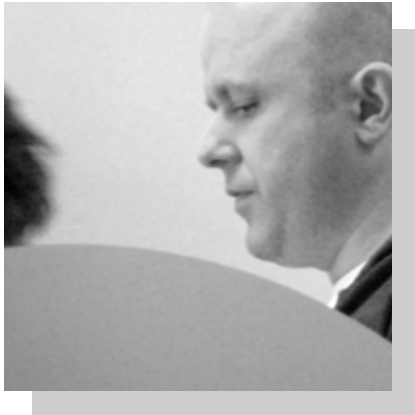
**Andrew Sullivan's essay on blogging in The Atlantic magazine:
[Why I Blog](#) is an inspirational piece from one of the masters of
blogging as a form. A couple of sample quotes:**

"It was obvious from the start that it was revolutionary. Every writer since the printing press has longed for a means to publish himself and reach—instantly—any reader on Earth....

"You can't have blogger's block. You have to express yourself now, while your emotions roil, while your temper flares, while your humor lasts. You can try to hide yourself from real scrutiny, and the exposure it demands, but it's hard. And that's what makes blogging as a form stand out: it is rich in personality..."



ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Antony Mayfield is Vice President, head of content & media at iCrossing

Antony heads a team that has developed innovative approaches to marketing and communications online, including the Network Sense Mapping tool, which allows analysts on the team to build visual representations of how brands are connected to social

networks and other websites online. The team has also developed the Social Spaces Framework, an industry leading approach for large organisations engaging with online networks.

Prior to joining iCrossing UK (then Spannerworks) to establish its Content & Media division in 2006, Antony worked in corporate and brand communications for over a decade, most recently as a director in the Bell Pottinger Group, in its technology specialist brand, Harvard.

He is a regular public speaker on issues around social media and marketing, and writes on his personal blog [Open \(Minds, Finds, Conversations\)](#) and iCrossing's blog [Connect](#).

Tamsin Hemingray is content director at iCrossing

Tamsin heads a team of journalists and copywriters who produce user-centric, reader first content on behalf of iCrossing's clients. This team now blogs on behalf of a range of companies including MORE TH>N and Toyota GB.

Prior to working at iCrossing she led the Home Office's internal editorial team (and got the Permanent Secretary of the Home Office blogging), inhabited a cartoon chat island called Dobedo (one of the UK's first social networks – now defunct!) during the late 1990s and was part of the original pioneering editorial team at Telegraph.co.uk. Before that she was an old-school market researcher at BMRB International.

She blogs in a (very) personal capacity at [Tamsin's Blog](#) and Twitters compulsively as [@tamsinbishton](#).

Matt Neale is a social media analyst at iCrossing

Matt has a passion for all things Social Media and during his time at iCrossing has worked on campaigns for clients such as EMI, Marks & Spencer, Argos & Toyota.

Prior to joining iCrossing UK (then Spannerworks), Matthew worked as marketing manager for an innovative and successful music download site. He was also regularly sought out for freelance consultancy at numerous companies within the entertainment sector.



ABOUT ICROSSING

iCrossing is a world-leading digital marketing agency with search and social at its core. Ranked by Forrester Research in its most recent Search Wave Report as the best for both paid search and SEO, it puts its search expertise together with the most advanced social media framework in the market to deliver digital marketing strategies that embrace customers' real online behaviour.

iCrossing's approach is based on the belief that our attention has been set free. We now live in connected networks of experiences and information that we use to make all our decisions. Businesses that understand this shift - and that begin to live and be valued in those networks - will succeed. These are what we call 'connected brands'.

Based on these foundations, iCrossing blends natural search, paid search, social media, content, display advertising, user experience, web development, and analytics & insight to build connected online marketing strategies for brands that speak to and are truly informed by their customers' online journeys and needs.

We are a team of 550 people across 12 offices in the US and Europe. In the UK we employ 97 staff in London and Brighton and clients include Channel 4, Lynx/Axe, MORE TH>N, Toyota, HBOs, Porsche, Cornhill Direct, Cheapflights, Kiddicare, Lipsy, Virgin Atlantic, Travelocity, STA Travel, and many more.

Find out more at www.icrossing.co.uk, our blog connect.icrossing.co.uk, contact us on +44 (0)1273 827 700 or email results@icrossing.co.uk



CREATIVE COMMONS COPYRIGHT

Please feel free to copy, share and reference this e-book. All we ask is that you acknowledge iCrossing as the source and link to <http://www.iCrossing.com/ebooks> when citing the publication.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 License.



To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 543 Howard Street, 5th Floor, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA.

