

The **New Rules** of Business Blogs



How business owners and managers should act in blogosphere
if they want to explore this new communication channel

Linus Simonis
the author of PositioningStrategy blog

PositioningStrategy

Linus Simonis on Positioning Strategy in web 2.0 age



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you believe would benefit from reading it.**

Thank you.

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The New Rules of Business Blogs

How business owners and managers should act in blogosphere
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by Linas Simonis

The New Rules Of Business Blogs

How business owners and managers should act in blogosphere if they want to explore this new communication channel

Internet revolutionized business.

Rules which have worked in pre-internet era must be enriched or even replaced with the new rules from the internet era.

Rules which have worked in the internet 1.0 era must be enriched or even replaced with the new rules from the internet 2.0 era.

And blog rules which were created in early blogging years today for business blogging must be supplemented by the new Business Blog Rules.

What's in it for you?

If you are a teenager, interested in “expressing yourself” – nothing.

If you are a business owner, CEO, General Manager, Marketing Manager, Division Manager, Executive – a lot.



Blogs evolved and diverged into a wide variety of blog types. For business the most interesting type, of course, is the business blog.

“Blog rules must be supplemented by the new Business Blog Rules.”

Blog Evolution

In five years blogs diverged from online diaries to a wide array of blogs: diary, celebrity blog, problog, corporate blog, and, of course, business blog.

But what's shocking is that blogging rules which defined teenager's diary all are applying to business blogs too.

Business blogs have changed from “diaries” to a powerful marketing tool. But today this tool is managed by guiding old "internet diary" age rules.

Blogs evolutionized to the business blogs, but old-school blog marketers did not adapt blogging rules to the new situation.

Or maybe they did not notice that blogs diverged and not all rules are suitable for business blogging?



Big business created by the blog: www.boingboig.com



A good story of a professional blogger: www.problogger.net

“Business blogs have changed to a powerful marketing tool.”

Why do You Need to Learn the New Business Blogging Rules

Business today is evolving so rapidly, world is going flat so quickly, that a lot of yesterday's rules today have become obsolete.

The world is moving to the internet.

No, the world is not moving to the internet, the world has already moved there. Now the world is learning the new rules of being in the internet and these rules are much different from yesterday's rules.

The first attempts of being on internet created web 1.0 – internet with the rules from offline world.

Now the web 2.0 world has started, and the rules are different.

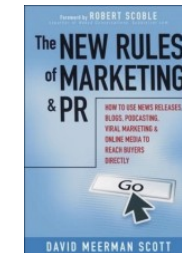
Lots of new businesses are marketed only with the new technologies, new internet tools, and by the new internet society.

In the nearest future lots of old businesses will be marketed only by the new medium – the internet, and it will be mandatory to them to adapt to the new rules, the new business blogging rules.



www.opendirectory.com

One of the first blogs. Yes, it has created a lot of blogging rules. But those are diary rules. For business blogging the rules have changed. So, you must learn business blogging rules.



Excellent book. The New Rules of Marketing & PR by David Meerman Scott. Today is the internet era and you must play by the internet era's rules.

Disclosure: I am mentioned in David's book in the chapter „Blogs outside of North America“.

“In the nearest future lots of old businesses will be marketed only by the internet.”

What is a Business Blog?

First, don't confuse business blog with problogging. Problogging is blogging for traffic and selling ads, affiliate links, reviews and other stuff. Problogger lives from the income stream generated by the blog itself not from the business he is blogging about.

Boingboig, Technozone, are the best examples of blogging for dollars from the website itself.

Darren Rowse – much better known as [Prologger](#) – suggests a very nice name of this industry. I appreciate him for it. Thank you, Darren.

In Wikipedia, business blog definition is simply redirected to corporate blog definition:

“A corporate blog is a weblog published and used by the organization to reach its organizational goals. Although there are many different types of corporate blogs, most can be categorized as either external or internal.”

This is true for a corporate blog. But a business blog has a lot of differences from corporate blog.

The business blog can be not only from corporations, but from every person who owns or manages business. From a CEO of Fortune 500 company to a solo practitioner.

A business blog is a personal blog from business owner, General Manager, CEO or other high-ranking authority about his business.

Business blog is one more marketing tool in today's web 2.0 age. And in a lot of cases – the main marketing tool.



One of the best business blogs from the CEO of a big company: Jonathan Schwartz. Check out: www.blogs.sun.com/jonathan



Did Bob Parsons, the CEO of GoDaddy.com, help his company to become a leader in domain registrar business? Yes, he did. A lot, actually. Check out: www.bobparsons.com

A business blog is a personal blog from business owner or other high-ranking authority.

What are the Differences Between Business Blog and Corporate Blog?

The biggest difference between the two is that the business blog is a personal blog about company, business or practice which the blogger manages. The blog owner is the business owner or the CEO or the founder of company.

The corporate blog (a la [Fastline](#)) dilutes a person and in first place puts Corporation. Yes, posts are signed by real people, but they reflect corporate rules. Bloggers often are hired in order to write and manage this corporate blog.

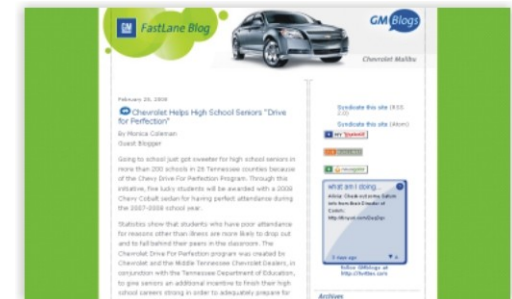
A business blog is from a person who runs his business. A CEO, owner or founder. A corporate blog – from a cold corporation.

Business blog is personal, corporate – well, it is managed by some "blog officers", but in fact in most cases it is the stream of news from corporation, not from the CEO or business owner (check differences between [Fastline](#) and [English Cut](#)).

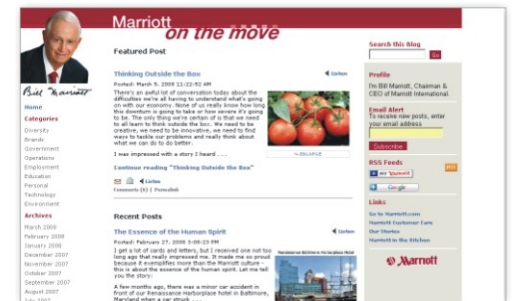
Business blog is a personal blog of a person who represents all business. All business blogs are only external, focusing on customers and prospects.

There are a lot of such blogs, most of them – small companies or solo practitioners, but in the last year even managers of big corporations have started blogging. Sun Microsystem's Howard Schwartz comes first in mind.

It happens because more and more managers feel the necessity to have a business blog.



Sorry, but this **is not** a business blog:
www.fastlane.gmblogs.com



This **is** a business blog: www.blogs.marriott.com. And a good one, by the way!

“Business blog is a personal blog of a person who represents all business”

Why Managers Must Have a Business Blog

Internet is one more marketing communication channel. In most cases, you simply can't let yourself not to be here.

Business blog is one more tool in the marketing battle with competitors. If you have one, competitors not – you have some advantage. If you don't have one, but your competitors have – you must establish one as soon as possible if you do not want to let competitors overcome you.

Not long time ago internet and blogs were only for internet technies and teenagers. Now almost all kinds of information can be found there. And people are searching.

If only a competitor writes about your business area, you are in trouble. Your customers will hear only your competitor's arguments, only the arguments why to choose him.

You simply must react and establish your own blog as soon as possible.

Or be proactive and set your own blog faster than your competitor.

But business blogs have almost nothing in common with personal blogs. If you want to use this new tool, you must learn the new rules. Business blog rules.



Mark Cuban – a fantastic example, that if you have a good blog, you can escape the necessity of journalists. Check his story: www.blogmaverick.com



Ted Leonsis – another owner of a sports team, another blogger. It is interesting to compare his and Mark's blogs. www.ted.aol.com

“If only a competitor writes about your business area, you are in trouble.”

Old Blog Rules – the Rules of “Creating Buzz”

Old rules of blogs are all about traffic, Technorati ranks, number of comments, appreciation, buzz and other self-serving things.

Of course, if you are a teenager or Donald Trump, your goal can be “creating buzz around me” or showing “how smart I am”, but if your goal is to help yourself or your company make money, this approach – only creating of buzz – is worthless.

If you are a problogger, your rule is to create content that generates traffic and encourages visitors to click on ads or affiliate links.

Rules change when it comes to business blogging.



Despite his famous “you are fired!” phrase, Donald Trump creates a good example of the business blog. It is worth to mention, that not all posts are written by Donald Trump himself. About half or so are written by the Donald Trump University staff. Check: www.trumpuniversity.com/blog

“If you are a teenager or Donald Trump, your goal can be “creating buzz around me” or showing “how smart I am”.”

A New Rule Of Business Blog

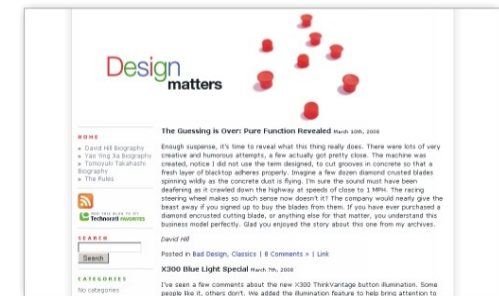
It's all about creating the perception that you and your company are the specialist in your field. It's all about showing the difference from competitors.

It's all about creating new category in prospect's mind and linking this category description with your company's name.

It's all about creating evangelists and spreading your ideas around the world.

It's all about fitting into overall marketing strategy.

But at first let's look how marketing strategy evolved.



Two wonderful blogs from the computer giant: Inside the Box and Design matters. Both are highly focused on ThinkPad laptop computers with excellent posts, which show why ThinkPads are different from all other laptops. Highly recommend checking:
www.lenovoblogs.com/insidethebox
www.lenovoblogs.com/designmatters

“It’s all about showing the difference from competitors.”

Ages of Development of Choices

It took a couple hundred of years for us to become so overloaded with choices of different products that our mind can't deal with.

It took about five years for us to become so overloaded with information on the internet that we can't handle.

And it took only a couple (ok, a little bit more) of years when we became overloaded with blogs.

In every development age communication has different rules. In the early stages people were interested in all messages about novelties. New and useful product sells itself.

In the next age mass advertised product was a mass sold product.

Next, product with a good “reputation” or “image” was the bestseller.

Internet era started. First webpages were like business cards on the web.

First blogs were promoted only by the word of mouth (ok, with the word from the keyboard too).

But in a couple of years number of blogs grew dramatically and is still growing every second.

Today if you want to be heard, you must follow the new rules. In business blogging you must follow the new rules of business blogs.

Ok, if there is a need to know the new rules of business blogs, let's examine the old rules of business blogs at first.



One of the internet era's architects Jason Calacanis. Worth visiting: www.calacanis.com



Blog created by Alan Meckler, the CEO of the new age company – Jupitermedia. All posts are about the new era media – the internet. www.weblogs.jupitermedia.com/meckler

“Today if you want to be heard, you must follow the new rules. In business blogging you must follow the new rules of business blogs.”

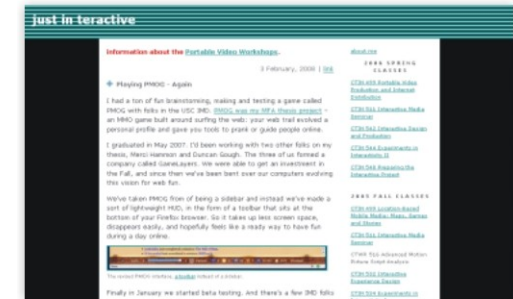
The Old Rules of Business Blogs

Because the first blogs were “diaries”, they applied to the diaries rules not any different from all blog rules:

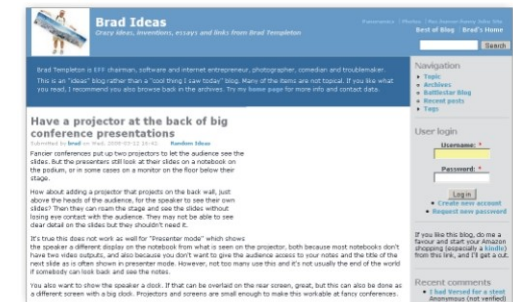
- Post frequently.
- Post must be short.
- Link, link, link. Especially if you have nothing to post about.
- Encourage comments, adding questions that are different from the core idea of your blog.

In the old days (some three or four, maybe five or six years ago) blogs were described as “diaries”. It was true, the first blogs had many similarities with diaries.

But now, for business blog these rules have been outdated. They look like the 1.0 version.



One of the first blogs in the world.
www.interactive.usc.edu/members/jhali



Another early blogger: Brand Templeton
www.ideas.4brad.com

“Now, for business blog these rules have been outdated. They look like the 1.0 version.”

What's Wrong With the Business Blog 1.0 Rules?

Let's see and demystify the most popular old rules of business blogs 

Old Rule of Business Blog: Post Frequently

The first and the most “must be” rule is the most dangerous. That's why:

- Frequent posting drives to poor content quality. It drives you out of the main blog idea, out of expression of your positioning idea to writing in the sake of writing.
- Frequent posting is the risk of losing subscribers. Seth Godin already noticed that RSS fatigue is setting in. Readers didn't have enough time to read everything they have subscribed to, so they tend to subscribe to the most relevant and most valuable content and unsubscribe from others. To read all the stuff simply takes too much of their time.
- Frequent posting after some months leaves you without new themes.
- Frequent posting keeps you out of the blogosphere – if you are an executive, frequent posting is not compatible with a high time-pressure job.
- Frequent posting drives from writing a new content to writing about a content found in other sites. Or even worse, just simple posting links without deeper insights and comments.
- Frequent posting drives from thinking deeply to thinking quickly. From writing deeply to writing quickly.

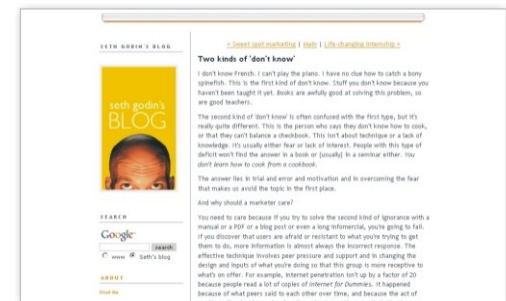
So, think twice, do you *really* have to post frequently?

It is a good idea to post at least once per month. Yes, a month, not a week. 12 posts per year. It seems that it is the minimum frequency.

I am sure, one post per month frequency can be afforded even by the most busy manager. Especially if we consider that publicity is crucial thing in today's business environment.



Thomas Mahon posts rarely. But it is worth reading every post. Because they are so deep, so informative, they have timeless value. www.englishcut.com



Seth Godin: three posts per day? Yes, if you are such a celebrity, so devoted to blogging like Seth Godin, you can. But if you are a CEO or business owner – you simply don't have time. www.sethgodin.typepad.com

“Frequent posting drives from writing deeply to writing quickly.”

Holiday Test

Imagine, you are going out to holiday for three weeks.

No internet, no reading, no business.

After three weeks you turn on a computer and look at your RSS reader.

How many new posts will you find?

Which posts will you read and which simply delete – those with one post from one blog, or those with twenty posts from one blog?

Why to assault your reader? Why to force him to skip (or, at least, only skim) your post?

Scarcity there really helps to be noticed and to be read from the beginning to the end.



Why to assault the reader with 624 unread items after returning from holiday?



“Why to assault your reader? Scarcity there really helps to be noticed and to be read from the beginning to the end.”

An Old Rule of Business Blog: the Post Must Be Short

Oh yes, if you are posting three times per day, of course it is a very comfortable “rule”.

It seems that it comes out from the myth that the reader did not have any time to read long posts.

There we can remember an old copywriter's saying: “A headline must be as short as possible and as long as it needed”. The same rule applies to an ad copy. The same is true for the length of post.

The post must be as long as it needs to clearly express your idea. If it is on a reader's interest topic, well written, with good insights, it can be as long as several thousand words.

Don't worry, the reader will read.

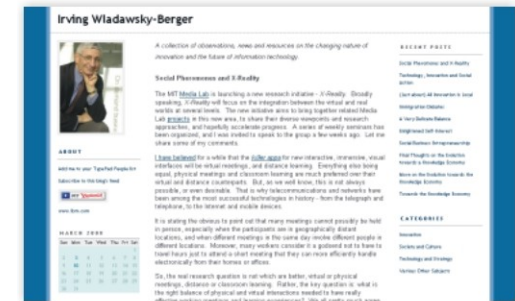
What the reader will not read, is irrelevant, off – topic, dull post. In this case it must be really short.

Paraphrasing Howard Gossage people don't read long posts. People read what interest them, and sometimes that happens to be a long blog post.

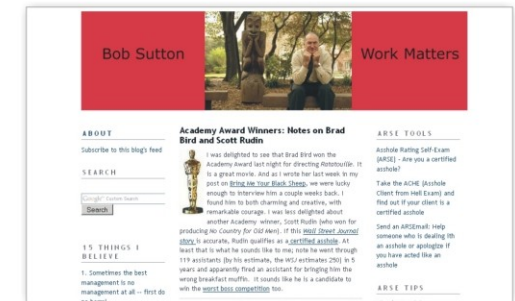
If once a month you will publish a well written, insightful post really helpful for your targeted readers, they will read.

Because they read long stories in newspapers, magazines. And guess what? It's amazing, but if they find it useful, they even read long books!

So don't worry about longevity, worry about the focus and quality.



Nice example, that if you write an interesting and thoughtful post, it can be long, very long, and readers will read. www.blog.irvingwb.com



Bob's posts are very long too. And his blog is very popular and informative. Worth reading! www.bobsutton.typepad.com

“People read what interest them, and sometimes that happens to be a long blog post.”

The Old Rule Of Business Blog: You Must Link

You must find reasons to link to other bloggers. Right?

Wrong.

Your business blog is not a news portal and people are coming here not for links to other sites.

Especially harmful rule is “If you don't have anything to say, collect and post some links to other sites”.

It's a myth. People are coming to your site not for additional links. They are coming for your unique content. They are coming to read more about your area of expertise.

Posts containing only links are spam coming through RSS reader.

It doesn't mean that you must totally avoid linking. No. If the link will help your reader understand you, you must link.

What you must avoid, is linking in the sake of linking.

Think about the reader and how to prove your uniqueness to him, not about links. Linking must come naturally, links must help the reader understand or broaden your idea.

Think about your preferred type of reader and write useful, focused, insightful post with or without links – it depends on the content.

Link must be the natural part of post, not an artificial add-on.



Bloggers, please, stop spamming us with posts, containing only links to other sites. Please, save our time!

“Posts containing only links are spam coming through RSS reader.”

The New Rules Of Business Blogs

Blogs from the teenagers stuff arrived to business community.

Paradox, but the rules remain unchanged. Even in business all blogging rules are “frequency, linking, buzz”...

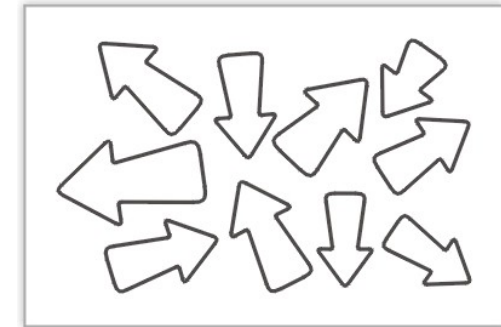
But in business blogs none of these rules are true.

What is the difference between mass blogs and business blogs?

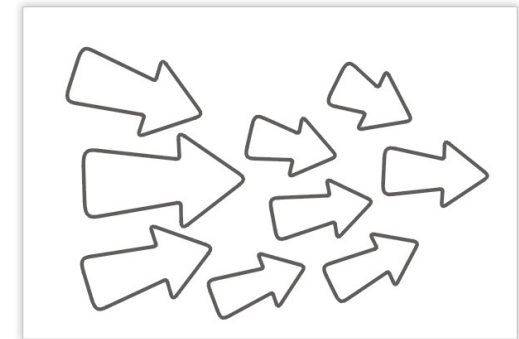
The new and old rules of blogs are separated only by one word. And this word is **Strategy**.

All the things that you do in your business blog must be aligned with your business's marketing strategy.

Remember, a strategy describes what makes you unique.



This is **not** a strategy



This is a strategy

“The new and old rules of blogs are separated only by one word.
And this word is Strategy.”

The New Rule of Business Blog: The Content Must Correspond to Your Business Strategy

Strategy is the finding of a right message and constantly delivering it to your prospects.

Web is only one more channel of delivering, like newspapers, radio or television.

Of course like all channels it has its own features. Web is the first interactive media. Communication goes in both sides.

But it is only one more tool and your blog must be a part of your strategy.

Your business blog must be tied up with all your marketing strategy, it means that like all other marketing tools it must once again show your uniqueness among competitors.

Every post is an opportunity to demonstrate why you are the best choice to the prospect. To demonstrate your specialization and passion to this specialty. So, don't dilute your message by writing off-topic posts. Readers are there because of your unquity, your specialization, not because of your writing about all things around you.

Your strategy is your uniqueness and your business blog must prove this uniqueness every time you post.



Business blog from the VP of Boeing – Randy Tinseth. Excellent, focused posts, worth to be read by anyone, not only by those who are in an airline industry. www.boeingblogs.com/randytinseth



Business blog from the CEO of Pitney Bowes – Mike Critelli. My suggestion: a blog will be better, if the posts are more rare, but more focused on Pitney Bowes' difference from competitors. www.mikecritelli.com

“Your business blog must once again show your uniqueness among competitors.”

Attention!

Beware of the Advertising Agencies!

Do not let an advertising agency create your business blog.

Creatives in advertising agencies are good in ad, which create one-way communication, especially in creating dancing and singing films pretending for festivals awards.

But advertising agencies are hopeless in creating two-way conversation with customers and prospects.

The ego of creatives from advertising agencies prevents them from speaking with the audience in common, conversational way.

It seems that even PR agencies have trouble with arranging blogs for clients (check Edelman and Wal-Mart).

You can't lie in web 2.0. Advertising and PR agencies must learn it.



Advertising agencies are best in creating singing and dancing commercials. But in general, creatives are hopeless in creating two way conversation.



Despite the fact that Richard Edelman has a blog himself, Edelman's relationship with Wal - Mart was a fiasco. Lesson: you can't escape the disclosure in web 2.0. www.edelman.com/speak_up/blog

“You can't lie in web 2.0.”

The New Rule of Business Blog: Focus on Your Idea

Blogs are not newspapers. Do not get tempted to become a news portal. It is the job of the big media newspapers. Or startups that want to become news portal.

So, forget the rule “If you have nothing to say, collect and post some links to other sites”.

Post only when you have to say something worth in your specialization area. Post only when your post will be helpful to your target audience and will prove your difference in your target audience's mind.

And link only when this link helps your reader to better understand your point of view.

Remember: readers come to your blog because of your view, your expertise, your personality. Not because there are a lot of random stuff on your blog.



It seems that frequent posting drives from the content. My suggestion: post more rarely, but more focused on your difference among competitors. www.berkshirepublishing.com/blog



Highly focused business blog by Christopher Mercer, the CEO of Mercer Capital. Well done, Chris! www.merceronvalue.com

“Post only when you have to say something worth in your specialization area.”

Is a Blog Similar to a Column in the Newspaper?!

In some steadpoint, yes.

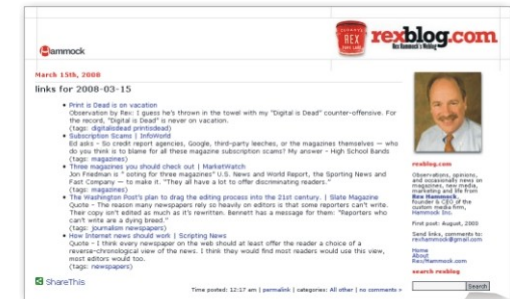
If your post is so insightful, so unique, so valuable that a monthly newspaper can pick it up and post in a column – that's fine! If it actually happens – if an editor of newspaper will propose to write a column – pick it!

Editors propose to write not to everyone. For it you must write with great consistency, unique content, fresh insights.

And my suggestion is – write your posts like articles in your column in a monthly newspaper. It is the right intonation of a real business blog.



If you are the CEO of Telekom, it is hard to get into the newspapers with your own minds. So, Rudi Fischer, the CEO of Telekom Austria has started a blog. Now he can write his own agendas on all issues. www.rudifischer.telekom.at



Some business blogs are from the CEOs of media companies. Sometimes media writes in blogs, not in own media! www.rexblog.com

“Write your posts like articles in your column in a monthly newspaper.”

About Comments

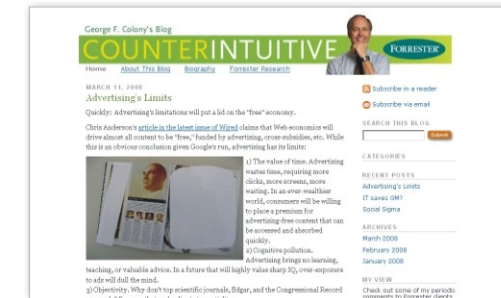
Focusing on your idea is true for the blog comments too.

Engage in blog conversation, but never miss the opportunity to subtly but clearly explain to your readers where and why you are the specialist, what is your point of difference, why it matters to them.

You must engage only to those comments of posts, that help strengthen your point of difference. Yes, there will be a lot of other, but reply and engage only to the ones that are about your uniqueness. That's the rule of web 2.0 world.



A nice example of how to handle comments on a blog. David Maister often asks his readers to express their opinion, but it is in such a good style, that all comments appearing on his blog are highly focused on his topic. Worth reading! www.davidmaister.com/blog.



An excellent blog of the founder and the CEO of Forrester Research – George F. Colony. Note, that George doesn't feel pressure to post frequently. He posts only when he has something to say. Good job, George! www.blogs.forrester.com/colony

“Engage in blog conversation, but never miss the opportunity to subtly but clearly explain to your readers where and why you are the specialist.”

Traffic vs Prospects

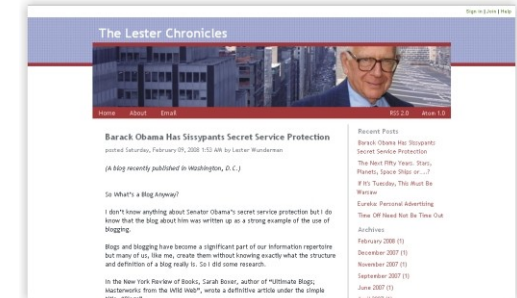
Forget just traffic. It's for kids. Or for Technorati rankers. Or for probloggers, whose business is Google ads.

If you are for more customers – concentrate on your topic, on your differentiation idea, concentrate on your message that will burn the desired position in your prospect's mind.

By sacrificing traffic and concentrating on targeted readers you will build a community of evangelists. Community of evangelists who will spread your ideas between other readers, who are interested in your blog topic. Between your potential customers or influencers.



Nice example and a knowledge source of how to make money online. Yes, he must have traffic, because he sells ads. But if you are the CEO, you don't need all traffic on your business blog, but only traffic of your prospects and customers. Maybe of the influencers too. So let's narrow the audience and focus on your target! one www.johnchow.com



A blog from the founder. Exactly one post per month. And all posts are like columns in your favourite newspaper: www.lesterchroniclesblog.wunderman.com

“If you aim for more customers – concentrate on your differentiation idea.”

Exception: Celebrity Blog

Don't confuse business blogs with celebrities blogs, even the business celebrities blogs.

There are a lot of nice business celebrities blogs around us:

David Maister, Guy Kawasaki, Seth Godin, Tom Peters, Laura Ries, Bob Sutton, David Meerman Scott, and others...

(sorry, if I missed one. I'll add more in my blog at www.positioningstrategy.com)

The difference is that all these bloggers on the day they started blogging were the big stars. Guy Kawasaki can write about hockey and Seth Godin can write observations about airport issues. Tom Peters can post photos from trips, Laura Ries can rejoice her newborn, David Meerman Scott can write about Apollo and 99% of readers in his web site still know who they are and for what idea he stands.

They are already the big brands in their fields. They are the celebrities. They are the monsters.

But if your name means nothing to the reader, if your reader does not have an idea of who you are, for what idea you stand, it is a big threat to create the wrong first impression.

Every post must express your point of difference again and again and again.

This is the immutable law of business blog.



www.davidmaister.com/blog



www.blog.guykawasaki.com



www.sethgodin.typepad.com



www.tompeters.com/recently



www.ries.typepad.com



www.bobsutton.typepad.com



www.webinknow.com



www.trumpuniversity.com/blog

Now

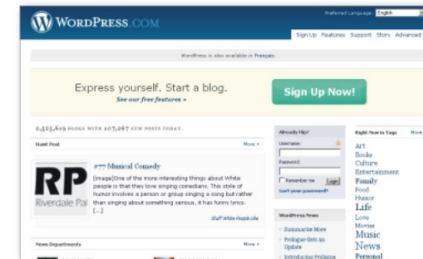
You know the new rules of business blogging.

So, just go and create your own business blog.

If you are not so sure about the necessity of business blog of your company, please, read this e-book one more time.

If you understand these new business blog rules, please, immediately go and create your own business blog.

Now. Immediately. Now. Right now. **Now!**



Start a business blog with www.wordpress.com



or www.blogger.com
or with other blogging platform you prefer.

Acknowledgments

My thanks go for those many authors who influenced me.

In web 2.0 world you never know who influences whom, where your knowledge goes to and whose life it can change after one insightful post on blog.

Wikipedia individual knowledge transformed to collective knowledge.

Blogs individual thinking transformed to collective thinking.

No way today to escape this. I am a no exception too.

But there are some great thinkers whose writing especially influenced me in this web 2.0 world.

My acknowledgments are for

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Thank you!

Linas Simonis | www.positioningstrategy.com

About the Author

Linas Simonis is a marketing strategy in the web 2.0 age consultant, conference speaker and seminar leader.

Linas's expertise is Positioning and Strategy in web 2.0 world – finding ways to come to humans mind in today's noisy web 2.0 society and helping arrange marketing moves in battle with competitors.

His publications were printed in all major marketing and management newspapers and magazines in Lithuania. As a marketing strategy expert he is interviewed and quoted frequently in the media. On Lithuania's state positioning topic he appeared in prime time programs on National Television, National Radio and others.

His appearances at conferences are widely praised for being insightful and provocative. Clear and intelligent.

In his carrier, Linas worked with more than 100 companies His clients are from solo practitioners to Fortune 500 company's of East and Middle Europe's branches.

To learn more about Linas, please visit www.positioningstrategy.com



My blog on Positioning strategy, about marketing in today's web 2.0 web.

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