



The National B2B Centre
Helping growing businesses make smart e-business decisions

Marketing Online article

Blogging or Blagging?

A recent survey of 2,000 SMEs by [Fasthosts](#) discovered that although nearly half of all small businesses could use blogging to drive traffic to their websites only 3% were actually intending to do so. So what's stopping the rest? Not clear of what to do? Not sure of the benefits? Don't believe that blogs or any of the other online techniques are any use at all?

Gareth Edwards, a National B2B Centre Associate takes a tour through the media to find out what's going on and whether it is blogging or blagging.

Everybody's doing it

According to the industry over 55m people worldwide are now officially defined as bloggers. Millions of business people belong to online networking groups such as Ecademy, OpenBC, LinkedIn, Ryze and Soflow. Untold numbers contribute to forums and discussion groups related to different industries, products and leisure activities. And still more entertain the world with their homespun videos and podcasts.

On October 17th 2006 the "One Day in History" Campaign organized by [History Matters](#) (www.historymatters.org.uk) attracted thousands of newbie bloggers by asking for a snapshot of people's lives during that day. Not only did a cross section of British society take part but it also attracted acres of coverage in the media.

And that's why blogging, networking, forums and the rest deserve your attention. They are hitting the mainstream and being actively used and read by your customers (young, old, rich and poor), your suppliers, and your employees.

And what they all have in common is that they provide visibility.

That's one of the reasons why [Google](#) (www.google.co.uk) has just paid \$1.65 billion for [YouTube](#) (www.youtube.com) the video sharing site (along with a fair bit of advertising revenue no doubt).

Make Yourself Heard

Anyone who has attended a B2B Centre event or used our website facilities knows that we caution that search engine optimization, whilst still being an important part of the eMarketing toolkit, is not a complete solution for low site visibility and poor keyword performance.

If you need to explain who you are or what you do then using blogs, networks or forums represent a great way to talk to customers, suppliers, employees, investors....you name it. It really, really isn't the techies anymore.

Back in May 2005 [Business Week Online](#) (www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/05_18/b3931001_mz001.htm) ran a cover story called "Blogs Will Change the Way You Do Business" and highlighted a smattering of examples of how US businesses were waking up to the potential for blogging. The story highlighted how GM's CEO Bob Lutz was using the medium to make some personal statements about the company and its products and winning plaudits for admitting to mistakes and problems. He used an opportunity to short cut the company's own press department to try and change the image of the corporate giant.



In May 2006 according to the [Fortune 500 Blogging Wiki](#) (www.eu.socialtext.net/bizblogs/index.cgi) (and Wikis are just another form of self-developed web content) nearly 10% of the firms listed on the index were now running a blog. What was interesting is that companies like GM other non-IT companies are getting on the bandwagon. [ING](#) (www.ingblogs.com/mycupofcha), [Walmart](#) (<http://walmartfacts.com/lifeatwalmart>), and [Nike](#) (<http://blog.nikebasketball.com>) all have blogs that are dealing with employee issues, strategy and, of course, promoting their products and services.

It is starting to happen for small business as well. Back in April 2006 BBC news website ran a story called "[Business bites the blogging bullet](#)" (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/4879160.stm>) which mentions the English Cut "the first tailoring blog." Check out the [English Cut](#) (www.englishcut.com) now and you will find that Thomas Mahon, the tailor behind the blog, is preparing to go on a US tour on the back of the publicity generated by his efforts.

[Nubricks](#) (www.nubricks.com) (a property development news blog) has been featured in the Guardian¹ recently in an article that highlighted the fact that it has gone beyond blogging and entered into the world of pod casting.

These are examples of where blogs and other user generated content have achieved media coverage but column inches are the icing on the cake. The main benefit is from all of those additional pages sat on the internet being indexed by search engines and read by real people. Do a search on "Nubricks" and see what I mean.

Not All Rosy

Are there downsides to the phenomenon? You bet.

According to the [Guardian](#)² Tim Berners-Lee (the inventor of the World Wide Web) "singles out the rise of blogging as one of the most difficult areas for the continuing development of the web, because of the risks associated with inaccurate, defamatory and uncheckable information."

David Cameron, Leader of her Majesty's Opposition, seems to be at the sharp end of Tim Berners-Lee's predictions. In the space of a month he has had his own blog spoofed by the UK Independence Party and had a video parody uploaded to YouTube by raffish Labour MPs Sion Simon and Tom Watson. It achieved 4,900 hits before being taken down. Fortunately for Mr. Cameron and unfortunately for his opponents the majority view appeared to be that the rather offensive suggestions in the video created more sympathy for Mr. C. than laughs at his expense.

Just like with websites and emails there will come a point where we have to align with trusted brands in order to make sure our messages are seen and heard in the right way.

And finally Google was mentioned at the top of the article for its YouTube purchase. Within days of the transaction a "slight problem" started to get mentioned. Tim Weber on the [BBC News site](#)³

¹ Guardian Unlimited Friday October 27, 2006 "More than just idle talk" Guy Clapperton.

² Guardian Unlimited November 3rd "Creator of web warns of fraudsters and cheats" Bobbie Johnson, technology correspondent

³ "Now on YouTube: Google's gamble" ANALYSIS By Tim Weber Business editor, BBC News website copyright material and no royalties are being paid. Let that be a lesson to us all – just make sure the pictures on your website are royalty free!



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<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/6036023.stm> suggested that “this website (YouTube) is a gigantic law suit waiting to happen.” Why? Well because a lot of the videos on the site are

There is some blagging and no doubt it will get worse. At the moment though blogging, and the other ways of generating content for the web, could do as much for your success in eMarketing as any amount of tinkering with your meta tags!

By Gareth Edwards, Associate E-Business Consultant, 2006