



Web Logs and XML

Toys or Tools for Business?

Entrepreneurs and Consultants SIG
Capital PC User Group
<http://www.cpcug.org>



Slide Archive

- <http://www.netlawtools.com/presentations>



Who's Here?



Blog Conference


- Weblog Business Strategies
June 9-10, 2003
Boston, MA
- [Weblog Business Strategies Conference.mht](#)
- Two reasons to be pleased with yourself for being here

Boston	\$ 995
CPCUG	\$ 0.00




Bonus: Carolyn Elefant

My Shingle





Jerry Lawson: Relevant Experience

- Blogs:
 - <http://www.netlawblog.com>
 - <http://www.realitychecker.org>
 - Under Development: *Lawblogs 101*
 - Under Consideration: *Fedlawyerguy.org*
- Books:
 - *Complete Internet Handbook for Lawyers* (ABA 1999)
 - Internet marketing book under development
- E-mail: lawson@netlawtools.com
- The best qualification?





Outline



- I. Why Blogs Matter
- II. Why News Readers Matter
- III. Blogs for Business
 - Customer Support
 - Knowledge Management
 - Marketing
- IV. Starting a Blog

Part I. Why Blogs Matter





What's A "Blog?"

Blog Examples


- Andrew Sullivan [link](#)
- Talking Points Memo [link](#)
- beSpecific [link](#)
- Carolyn Lenfant [link](#)




Why Blogs Haven't Gotten Much Respect



- Most blogs very poor quality:
 - Example #1 [Link](#)
 - Example #2 [Link](#)
- The Anti-Bloggies [Link](#) [Categories](#)
- A major reason: "An Audience of One."

Why Blogs Matter: Two Examples



1. The Country's Biggest Law Firms vs. Ernie
2. Lexis-Nexis vs. Jerry

Example 1: The County's Biggest Law Firms vs. Ernie

Web Site Popularity: Background

Why is Google so popular? Ex. "Googling" now a verb. Indirect use of human intelligence to rank search results.

- In essence, Google interprets a link from page A to page B as a vote, by page A, for page B. But, Google looks at more than the sheer volume of votes, or links a page receives; it also analyzes the page that casts the vote. Votes cast by pages that are themselves "important" weigh more heavily and help to make other pages "important."

Result: Importance of links ("The Google Economy")

- Incoming links improve relevance score.

Web Site Popularity: More

- High ranking (free) often more effective than paid ads – "The Google Economy" [Link](#)
- "Link farms"
- Drawback: blacklisting by search engines
 - Example -- 75% dropoff

Measuring Web Site Popularity

- Prefix search request with word "link:"
 - Example: [link:msnbc.com](#)
 - Alternate: Use "Advanced Search" feature.
- Example:
 - Covington & Burlington – 500 lawyer firm. Offices in Washington, New York, San Francisco, London, and Brussels.
 - Search at Google for links to their web site, <http://www.cov.com>.

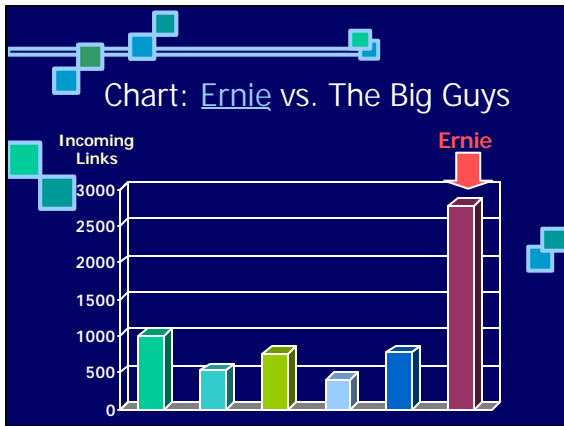
Finding the Top Law Firm Web Sites

- Micah U. Buchdahl, "Internet Marketing Attorney"
- [Link](#) to Nifty Fifty List



Example 1: The Best Large Firm Web Sites vs. "Ernie the Attorney"

	Lawyers	Incoming Links
Covington & Burlington	500	998
Vinson & Elkins	860	526
Gray Cary	420	756
Kirkpatrick & Lockhart	700	412
King and Spaulding	700	776
Ernie the Attorney	1	2770



Example 2: Lexis-Nexis vs. Jerry

Background: What's Lexis-Nexis? [Link](#)

Lexis-Nexis vs. Jerry

- Background: Link position battles
- Search request: "Lexis search engine"
- Result: [Link](#)

How Can One-man Operations Outdo the Best Large Firms in an Industry?

One Factor: Blog Format

Why Search Engines Like Blogs

- Search engines process RSS more easily than plain HTML. -- "What's RSS?"
- Search engines also favor:
 - Newer content over older.
 - Sites that have more links to them, especially if the links are from other popular sites (Lexis example).
- Blogs have advantages on all three factors.

Objections (& New Questions)

- "It's an apples and oranges comparison. I'm not really trying to use my blog to market legal services. Anyway, the blog format has inherent advantages over the web site formats used by large law firms, so these comparisons are unfair to the large firms."*
- Suppose some smaller businesses DID try to use blogs to level the playing field against larger businesses?
- Could this work? If so, how?

A Brief History of Blogs

- Low profile originally
 - Mostly for techies – 23 known blogs as of early 1999
- First do-it-yourself tools – July 1999. Soon there were hundreds of blogs.
- 9/11 attacks
 - More of a mass phenomenon
- Iraq War
- Now: by conservative estimate, hundreds of thousands.



Why Blogs Are Attractive, Part I

- Ease of use Sample "Edit Blog" page. [Link](#)
- Lower audience expectations
- Low cost

Sample Blog Costs

Blogger Pro	\$35/Year	Regular version free.
Radio	\$40/Year	
Movable Type	\$150 License for Commercial Use.	Free for personal use. Optional installation for \$40.

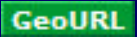
Notes:

- Recommended for all blogs: custom domain name. **Cost:** \$9 per year from discounters like *GoDaddy*.
- Radio & Blogger Pro fees include hosting space. For more room & other advantages, may want separate web host. **Cost:** \$6/year from discounter like *InternetPlanners* or *WebHost4Life*.

Why Blogs Are Attractive, Part II

- Better search engine visibility
- Open architecture and open standards (Blogger API)
- Greater audience reach through the use of RSS
- "Buzz" & developer interest (cf. WWW circa 1994)

Geo URL



- www.geourl.org
- Washington, DC [area](#)

On the Other Side: The Mass of Mediocrity



Why Blogs Deserve Respect




- Sturgeon's Law
- An object lesson: Trent Lott resignation ([LPM](#))
 - *Wall Street Journal, NY Times*
- Adoption by tech-savvy intermediaries (cf. trendsetters)
 - Librarians
 - Reporters
- Conclusion: Blog audience has disproportionate number of early adopters, trend setters, opinion influencers—partly due to RSS & news readers, our next topic.



Part II: Why News Readers Matter



AKA "Does XML Really Change Everything?"



"News Reader vs. News Aggregator"


- Terminology Note



XML



eXtensible Markup Language



RSS — One Flavor of XML



- "Real Simple Syndication", or "RDF Site Summary" or "Rich Site Summary."
- Developed for "My Netscape," then abandoned by Netscape
- *Good article*: J.D. Lasica, "News That Comes To You" [Link](#)
- Sample
 - [Main Page](#)
 - [RSS Feed](#)



Newsreader Examples

- Online
 - *General*: News Is Free [Link](#)
 - *Industry-specific*: Daily Whirl [Link](#)
- Locally Installed
 - AmphetamineDesk
 - Radio (included with blogging software)
 - FeedReader

Using Newsreaders

- 
 ■ Example: NewzCrawler [Link](#)
 (General)
- 
 ■ Subscribing:
 - Logo/"Subscribe," etc.
 - Optimized feeds
 (Radio)

Newsreaders: The Next Big Thing?

- Problem 1: Too much information available
- Problem 2: Making people remember your site
 - One approach: "Push"
- Better Solution?
 - "Most people, once they start using RSS to check the news, just don't go back, the amount of time and irritation saved is totally, completely addictive."

Syndicating Your Web Site

- Resource: "Publish and Syndicate Your News To the Web," <http://gils.utah.gov/rss/> [Link](#)

Summary: Syndication

- Future releases of browsers and/or e-mail software will include RSS reading features. Consequence?
- Web design software like Dreamweaver, MS FrontPage, etc. will include automatic RSS generation features.
- Choices in the meantime:
 - Can insert codes by hand (The Virtual Chase -- [Link](#)).
 - Use separate RSS generation software.
 - Use a blog—most decent blog software has built-in RSS generation.

Non-RSS (i.e., Long Range) Blog Advantages

- Blogs will retain some advantages even after conventional sites add RSS feeds.
- Difficult for conventional web sites to compete on freshness of content.
 - Google re-indexes sites that are frequently updated, including most blogs, *every day*.
 - Static web site whereas they may only re-index the typical static web site once a month or less.
- Blogging culture encourages building of links.
 - No need for "link farms," etc.

Part III: Blogs for Business

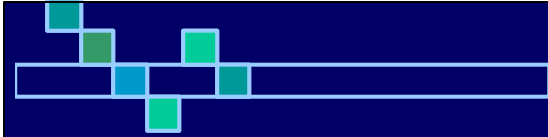
Now That We Understand:

1. Blogs, and
2. Newsreaders




Three Main Blog Business Uses


1. *Customer Support*
2. *Knowledge Management*
3. *Promotion*




Business Use #1: Customer Support




Example: [Lawyer's Guide to Internet Marketing—Bad Good](#)
Example: [Macromedia](#) [Link](#)
Example: [Peyser Associates](#) [Link](#)




Business Use #2: Knowledge Management



"Klogs"



KM: It's Not Who You Know, It's ...

- Example: [UnivAttorney](#). [Link](#)
- The first cliché of knowledge management?
- Hint: 

If HP knew what HP knows ...



But Blogs Are Just Toys!




Are more powerful custom or off-the-shelf
KM systems preferable?



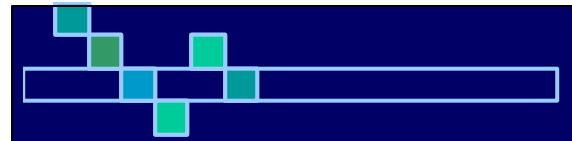
Answering the Skeptics: Why Blogs for KM?

- The second biggest cliché?
- The main advantage of blogs.
- Other blog advantages.




Blogs for KM: Conclusion

- *"It is not rocket science, it is not expensive, and it is relatively easy to set up by someone with modest technical skills."*
- From article "Low-cost Klog Network" [Link](#)




Marketing

Example: Alan Gilbert Photography [Link](#)
Example: *Christian Science Monitor* [Link](#)




Part IV: Starting A Blog



Is A Blog Right for Your Business?


- Personality?
- Writing skill?
- Is there an audience?
- Do you have something to say?
- Available time?



Yellow Lights

- "It really can take a lot of time. I spend two hours a day on my weblog. Many people don't realize this, they think it's a quick way to get popular. And after awhile they get really discouraged and say, 'he got 2,300 hits today, I got four.' The bulk of people out there get less than two dozen hits."
- "I don't want to be elitist, but all these people out there with popular weblogs, they've been doing it longer and they stick to their guns."

Farhad Manjoo, in *Wired*



Preliminary Questions to Resolve

- Solo or team blog?
- Writer or referrer?

Three Popular Blog Choices

Blogger Pro	Web-based	Very popular; bought out by Google this winter.
Radio	Install on local computer	Many powerful features, including "categories." Local installation limits flexibility.
Movable Type	Install on web server of user's choice	Unix-based software is more powerful than choices above.

Smart Approaches

- Plan for success: Get a custom domain name from the beginning.
- Test your blog before you publicize it (or have live links to others).
- Have a tagline that describes your blog's purpose.
- Unless you have decided to use a pseudonym, consider feature your name(s) prominently.
- Relax, but not too much. One of the advantages of blogs is that the conventions of the new medium lower expectations. This creates a sense of freedom that can be liberating for some writers, but excessive laxity can create a negative impression.
- Be generous about linking to other blogs, both in your permanent list of links ("blogroll") and inside blog entries.



Things To Avoid

- Overt commercialization
- Having long blog entries appear in your RSS feed.
 - Keep blog entries that will appear in your RSS feed short.
 - Link from them to longer essays that do not appear in your RSS feed.
- Obscure insider references. (Like "Dave")
- "Mystery links."



Three Ways to Prepare

- Read blogs.** Figure out what works and what doesn't.
- Read blogs through newsreaders.**
- Read about blogs.**


Books About Blogging 1

	Shelly Powers (Ed.), Essential Blogging	A typical high quality O'Reilly Press book, with good discussion of technical aspects of Blogger, Movable Type, Radio & other key contenders.
	Paul Bausch, Matthew Haughey & Meg Hourihan We Blog: Publishing Online with Weblogs	Well written, with many good ideas.

Books About Blogging 2

	Biz Stone Blogging: Genius Strategies for Instant Online Web Content	A poor title, but an extremely valuable book, with many great practical tips.
	Todd Stauffer Blog On: The Essential Guide to Building Dynamic Weblogs	Very useful, with simple, well-written explanations.

Books About Blogging 3

	Ben Hammersly Blogging Hacks	Due for publication in August 2003.
	Rebecca Blood The Weblog Handbook	Hobbyist orientations limits value for business use. Espouses "audience of one" philosophy.


Conclusion

1993 vs. 2003

- ### "The Three Stages of Blog-Awareness"
1. There must be something to blogs because so many people are into it, but I don't have a clue.
 2. OK, it does seem kind of cool and there is much, much more to it than I expected. I just don't see any really practical applications.
 3. Oh my God, the things I can do with this are coming to me faster than I can keep up with.
- [Steve Covell](#)
[Louisiana Supreme Court Report](#)

Questions?

- One more story:
- Mrs. Rabi's technique ...



Dr. Isidor Rabi
Nobel Prize, Physics