

Blogs: Marketing Evolves Online

Has your company entered the blogosphere yet?

As marketers explore new ways to reach their audience, there is a continuing focus on one-to-one targeted approaches. The newest evolution to appear in this space is blogging. It is becoming one of the quickest and most personal ways to have your message seen by scores of people.

But how many are using blogs? A survey of participants at a recent Institute for the Study of Business Markets Web cast found that 27 percent use blogs on a personal level, but only 16 percent said that their companies have a b-to-b blog.

The novelty of blogging offers some unique opportunities to differentiate your organization and allow you to be the first to market within this space.

Rick Short, director of corporate communications at Utica, N.Y.-based Indium Corporation, a developer, manufacturer and supplier of specialty alloys and solders, says he has experienced great success since developing his company's blog. Indium is now able to talk with more than 30,000 loyal readers each month. That's more than 1,000 followers per day in a rather unique industry of electronic assembly materials.

An important element to consider is your blog's content. Although blogging can be more informal, you still need to think about your message and how it will come across to your audience.

A frequently asked question is: Should you hire professional writers? Most experienced bloggers would say no. It is important, however, that you have contributors who are considered topic experts. This is what will draw people to your site. For instance, Indium's most popular contributor is a senior technologist who has more than 20 years of experience in electronic and optoelectronic packaging.

So you've been thinking about blogging, but don't know how to get started? Here are some ideas:

- First, read blogs for yourself. Find a site that is of personal interest to you. A good one to try,

naturally, is *Sales & Marketing Management's* blog at www.smmsoff.com.

- Determine your goals are for a corporate site. Do you want it to be a tool to get customer feedback, to introduce your product or solution, or develop a company personality?

- Benchmark other companies who have developed a blog you like. Write to them to find a contact with whom you can discuss technology and find out how he or she got started. Discover what type of platform the company is using as well as information about image and video management.

- Get management buy-in and support for developing a blog. Once started, it needs nurturing and attention to keep the audience engaged.

- Think about the rules and etiquette that need to be established for those contributing to the site. You'll find good examples of this from surfing the Web.

- Get started and have fun! Blogging gives you a chance to share your passion and personality, and give your readers an opportunity to see the human side of the organization.



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