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How Real People Are Finally Being Heard

The 1.0 Guide to the Blogosphere for Marketers & Company Stakeholders

First in a Series on New Communications & Word-of-Mouth Marketing

By Edelman and Intelliseek • Spring 2005

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In a very short time, the blogging phenomenon has drastically altered the landscape and challenged traditional tenets about the control of messaging by corporations, the media, the government, marketers and company stakeholders.

According to Edelman's 2005 Trust Survey, peoples' trust has shifted from authority figures to "average people, like you." In fact, 56% of Americans trust only the opinions of physicians and academicians more than they trust the opinions of people like themselves. What does this mean? The average person does not want canned, neatly packaged messages; the average person wants to engage and be engaged in conversations. And blogs—short for Web logs—have rapidly emerged as one of the newest technologies driving this shift.

Blogs are easily published, personal Web sites that serve as sources of commentary, opinion, and uncensored, unfiltered sources of information on a variety of topics. The best-written and most widely read blogs are characterized by their authors' genuine passion for a specific topic or issue—what some call "passionate journalism," or reporting with an informed bias. Blogs also serve as communities where information, links, opinions, videos, audio files, photos and other forms of media are easily and frequently shared, where elaboration can be offered, disagreements can be aired, and comments can be posted. Together, this collective conversation is called the Blogosphere, and it's one of the fastest growing areas of new content on the Internet.

This new and growing critical mass is forcing marketing professionals and company stakeholders to think differently about how they go to market. Bloggers are speaking and being heard in real time, and only recently has the marketing community begun to grasp bloggers' impact on brands, business and issues. Because of their speed, bloggers can and do alter the volume and tone of any conversation. Gone are the days of waiting months to get reliable feedback on an initiative. The new reality is this: any blog author with a passion for what you're selling knows what you're doing the minute you do it—and maybe even before. Bloggers comment immediately, and marketing and business professionals can quickly lose control of the conversation.

This white paper is an initial look at the dynamics of the Blogosphere. It's intended to inform marketing and communications professionals about the who, what, where and how-to of blogging. If this paper has done justice to the subject of blogging, it also should sound a huge wake-up call. Blogging is not a passing fad…but any brand, business or organization that fails to grasp the fact may very well be.

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THE BLOGGING BOOM: WHAT BLOGS ARE...AND HOW THEY'VE GROWN

It was obvious that blogs would go down in 2004 history when dictionary publisher Merriam-Webster designated "blog" as the most sought-after word of the year at its Web sites.

Is it any wonder? Blogs are booming, not only in number but also in authority and reach. According to some estimates, about 20,000 new blogs are created daily, meaning that millions of people have their own sites on the World Wide Web—sites that in turn attract millions of readers. These bloggers foster conversations, connections and new relationships, and their growth shows no sign of slowing in the immediate future.[1]

Since the late 1990s and into 2005, blogs have evolved from "under-the-radar" status to mainstream prominence, one of the fastest rises to awareness of any source of Internet content. The reasons are many. Blogs are as easy to create as they are diverse in content. The estimated 10 million U.S. blogs that will be in existence by the end of 2005 (and possibly 34 million worldwide) cover a range of topics—politics, entertainment, music, art, life, love, popular culture, sports, work, advertising, marketing. Asking what bloggers "cover" is like asking what people write about on paper: whatever they want to. Blogs are a natural extension of so-called "consumer-generated media"[2] or "citizens' journalism," and as studies have shown, the public is often far more trusting of other consumers or members of the public than it is of traditional institutions, including corporations, advertisements, marketers and other "officials."[3]

Indeed, bloggers played a role in creating and disseminating information during the 2004 Presidential campaign, fueled initially by Howard Dean's Blog For America (www.blogforamerica.com), which helped recruit new volunteers and raised record amounts of money via the Internet for his campaign. When the world's largest natural disaster took place in late 2004 in remote Southern Asia, bloggers in Thailand, Indonesia, India and other affected countries quickly jumped into action (e.g., http://tsunamihelp.blogspot.com/) to provide some of the first on-the-scene "reporting," including casualty reports, videos of the damage, heart-breaking photographs, government updates, links to relief agencies, lists of missing persons and victims, hospital reports and more. This shift from appointment-driven news consumption to on-demand news consumption is altering the news media landscape.

Instapundit, (www.instapundit.com) a leading political blog written by University of Tennessee law professor Glenn Reynolds, attracts more than 100,000 unique visitors a day—more than the readership of most newspaper columnists.

While bloggers rely on mainstream media for their commentary fodder, they also have "broken" stories independently. Bloggers, for example, kept attention focused on former Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott's impolitic comments leading to his eventual resignation, and a blogger knowledgeable about typefonts outed the fake memos

used by Dan Rather of CBS's "60 Minutes," leading to Rather's apology and the firing of four CBS staffers. Bloggers turned up the heat on other key issues in early 2005: commentator Armstrong Williams' payments by the Department of Education to soft sell the No Child Left Behind program; the resignation of CNN news executive Eason Jordan for off-the-record comments he made (but were blogged about) at a forum in Switzerland; and the true identify of Republican operative James Guckert (aka Jeff Gannon), who managed to receive daily reporter credentials to the White House briefing room.

As a study by the journalism-focused Poynter Institute[4] points out: "Bloggers—and others inspired by their success—are forcing accountability on news organizations. They're also demanding—and sometimes getting—a much bigger say in what's news."

And beyond the popular, well-read, high-traffic bloggers are millions of bloggers who write for a handful of readers about issues close to them. This so-called "long tail" of bloggers (a term coined in an article by *Wired* editor Chris Anderson in October 2004) represents a new phenomenon that should be of great interest to marketers: millions of micro-communities around shared interests.

Writes journalism professor Philip Meyer in his book, *The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age* (University of Missouri Press): "There has been a drift away from mass media to more specialized media...The bloggers are the latest manifestation—more messages to smaller numbers of people."

For the advertising and public relations community, blogs' quick rise to prominence poses serious questions. If bloggers were able to establish an influential presence in a national presidential election in a few short months, where will they turn their attention and scrutiny next? The media? The advertising community? The PR community? Marketers? Corporate America? Education? Government? Analysts? Regulators?

History of blogging

Internet-savvy users have always had the ability to create and update daily journals, but blogs came into their own when software made it incredibly easy to build, maintain and update a "Web log." Those same technologies further allowed creators of personal Web pages to link to each other's Web pages—a practice that continues among bloggers today. The term "Web log" was coined by Internet writer Jorn Barger in 1997; the shorter term "blog" evolved in 1999, when only a few hundred blogs existed. Today, the Blogosphere contains an estimated 5-10 million blogs, and blog-based words were added to the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 2003.

What is a blog? What is blogging?

For a simple definition, a blog is an easily created Web page, made possible by free or inexpensive software (Blogger, BlogSpot, Diaryland, LiveJournal/Six Apart, Movable Type, Pitas, Typepad, Xanga, etc.) that allows a user to create a diary-like Web page in a matter of minutes.

Each new entry is called a "post," and posts appear on a blog page in reverse chronological order. Blog posts typically are characterized by numerous links to other pieces of information, including other blogs, news stories, images/photos, commentaries, videos, audio clips, etc. Blogs also have other distinguishing characteristics, including a calendar or archives, a permanent Web address for each post (permalink), and the ability for users to post comments.

Bloggers Defined: Youngish Internet veterans with a need for news

Youth, high-speed Internet connections and online experience are fueling the blogging phenomenon. A demographic update of bloggers from the Pew Internet & American Life Project[3] in early 2005 provides these demographic insights into bloggers:

- 57% of bloggers are male, 43% are female
- 48% of bloggers are age 30 or under, but 52% are over 30
- 70% of bloggers have broadband/high-speed Internet access at home
- 82% of bloggers have been Internet users for six or more years
- 42% of bloggers live in households earning more than $50,000 a year
- 39% of bloggers have college or graduate degrees
- 12% of Internet users have posted comments or other material on blogs—representing 14 million people and a three-fold increase since April 2004
- 5% of Internet users use RSS aggregators or XML readers to get news and other information from blogs and content-rich Web sites as soon as it's posted online
- Blog readership is growing among all demographics

Supportive technologies also make blogging ubiquitous. Most blogging software automatically generates a summary of each post as it is created, and this summary is contained in a file format called RSS, short for Really Simple Syndication. This file is visible to software called aggregators. A user who wants to keep up with dozens or even hundreds of other blogs will feed the Web addresses/URLs of those blogs to the aggregator. The aggregator will fetch new RSS files and display the headlines to the user. RSS feeds are an efficient, low-cost way to make content globally and quickly available, and are being used not only by bloggers but also by media outlets, including the BBC, CNN, Yahoo! News and others. Other technologies—including podcasting (audio capabilities), moblogging (mobile-device-enabled blogging) and audio streaming—will make them more and more robust over time.

THE IMPACT OF BLOGS: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHANGES

Because content is refreshed frequently, blog entries quickly rise to the top of the listings in search engine results, a feature that no doubt has spurred their quick rise in popularity. According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, blog readership jumped 58% in 2004, from 17% to 27% of Internet users who said they read blogs daily. 7% of U.S. Internet users—8 million—have created a blog. But because blogs often look like Web sites, or because the distinction between the two content sources isn't always apparent, the same Pew study

found that only 38% of users know what a blog is and the rest aren't sure.

Regardless, people are creating blogs, and people are reading blogs. And bloggers have sent a collective message that the business, public relations, marketing and advertising communities must heed: "Bloggers are here, and bloggers are here to stay. Deal with us."

Blogs can be fertile locations for companies hoping to find passionate advocates for all that bloggers write about: products or services, ideas, technology, health care, beauty, arts, crafts, movies, entertainment, political campaigns, and more. As speaker-blogger Halley Suitt (Halley's Comment) pointed out at the January 2005 Blog Business Summit in Seattle: "The blogs you want to read have a voice...you need to sound alive. The writing must have passion, or no one will care."

Blogs represent a paradigm shift that presents new challenges and opportunities for the advertising, public relations and marketing communities—challenges and opportunities that require quick responses, protocols and policies. Blog applications can include:

- **Research & Insight:** Blogs serve as new sources of "market research" and can be rich leading indicators because of their quick syndication and search-engine reach.
- **Word-of-Mouth Identification, Tracking, Analysis:** Blogs are a new forum in which people with shared interests spread information. Tracking their points of view in the blogosphere is important to every company, organization and brand.
- **Advertising & Advertising Effectiveness Testing:** Some brands have launched blogs as ads (Nike's Art of Speed "adverblog," for example), while blogs rich in commentary can provide new contexts for measuring message and public relations effectiveness in near real time.
- **Early Warning Radar:** When corporate reputation and news issues emerge, blogs can serve both as the vehicle by which information spreads and as a source for "early warning."
- **Extension of Relationship Marketing:** Blogs also serve as venues where passionate consumers and individuals express feelings and encourage discussion.
- **Stakeholder & Corporate Communications:** Blogs can provide venues for employees to speak out and defend the company or brand, or they can establish identities, feedback devices, dialogue and authority for corporations or individuals who engage in blogging.
- **Targeted Marketing:** Blogs can open new, targeted advertising space through outright buys or sponsorship, keyword buys or contextual ad buys.
- **Multi-Media Information sources:** Most of today's first-generation blogs are text-heavy, authored by people who like to write. But bloggers increasingly are embedding videos, audio, still images, and interactive media in their blogs as well. Blogs can become rich-media information sources…and tools for so-called

"citizen surveillance," whereby every person becomes a de facto reporter.

- **Thought Leadership:** A corporate blog, or employee participation in others' blogs, can raise a company's reputation as the idea leader in a specific market or industry.

Blogs: New Sources of Buzz

In the pre-blog world, "buzz" was created by news, stunts and events—both online and offline—that captured consumers' imagination and got talked about, written about and spread around. Buzz was measured and gauged by news clipping services, online click-throughs and hits, noticeable increases in brand sales. In much of the pre-blog world, advertisers and public relations professionals had vast amounts of control over the tone, timing, content and release of information and announcements. "News" was strictly defined as emanating from newspapers, magazines, trade journals, radio and TV broadcasts or other well-defined specialty sources, and created by well-defined lists of identified journalists and beat writers and producers.

Today, however, "news" and new ideas surface immediately from any variety of online sources, including blogs, some of them totally unexpected and off the radar. Often, news emerges in rich-media formats that include audio links, still images and video links. Bloggers can appear overnight, gaining traction and a reputation in a matter of days or weeks rather than building it over years.

Types of Bloggers

Bloggers come in different varieties; Edelman and Intelliseek have categorized them based on function, content and significance to marketers.

Blog Area	Description	Volume	Reach
Credentialed News Blog Writers	Formal members of the media who employ blog publishing format (including RSS)—e.g.,, a newspaper blog or magazine blog, San Jose Mercury News technology columnists http://www.siliconvalley.com/mld/siliconvalley/business/columnists/gmsv/	Low	High
A-List, High-Traffic Bloggers	Blog writers who are not "credentialed" by traditional media but nonetheless have meaningful audience, even among traditional media—e.g., Daily Kos, Instapundit, etc.	Low	Med-High
Corporate or B2B Professional Blogs	Blogs by business professionals—formal or informal—targeted to specific industry verticals—e.g., Robert Scoble's Scobleizer Blog for Microsoft; General Motor's Fast Lane Blog.	Med	Med
Marketer-Sponsored Blogs	Blogs created, managed, and promoted by companies or suppliers, agencies, brands, etc.—e.g., Manolo Shoe Blog http://manoloshoes.blogspot.com	Low	TBD
General Consumer Blogs	Blogs created by typical consumers that include references to all aspects of life and the consumer experience, both positive and negative—e.g., LiveJournal, Blogspot.	High	Med-High
Focused Consumer Blogs	Blogs created by average consumers on specific topic areas including wine, autos, gamers, healthcare options—e.g., Professor Bainbridge on Wine http://www.professorbainbridgeonwine.com/	High	Med

Essentially, bloggers have established a new micro-universe of information creation, dissemination and influence, a universe that warrants attention, response and consideration, and one where rules don't follow the accepted norms and practices of the communications and media communities. It's time for marketers and stakeholders to engage and participate with their customers instead of just transmitting to them.

Edelman and Intelliseek describe this new information paradigm as "organic awareness" or "organic influence." Whatever is most interesting rises to the top of consciousness in the Blogosphere, regardless (or even in the absence) of any marketing or "push" by the person posting it or creating it. Sometimes, an idea or posting is just so creative, outrageous, insightful or funny that other bloggers share it almost instantaneously, urging each other on with "you gotta check this out!" links and comments that spread the fever and excitement.

In late 2004, for example, one of the most linked-to Web sites on Intelliseek's BlogPulse.com, a blog portal that tracks and analyzes millions of blogs a day, was http://fallujahinpictures.com/, a raw but realistic blog site featuring unedited, uncensored photos of on-the-ground fighting in Fallujah and elsewhere in Iraq. They were not the kind of photos the Pentagon would have approved, but because they existed in the Blogosphere, they were photos over which the Pentagon had no control. The Blogosphere doesn't need Pentagon approval. Likewise, the politically satirical cartoons created by the JibJab.com brothers spread in mid- to late-2004 and into 2005 almost entirely by word-of-mouth links and e-mails among bloggers and Internet users. The Blogosphere doesn't have "politically correct" censors.

Which begs the question: when bloggers are in the equation, just who is "the press" and what is a good definition of "the media"? Many savvy public relations professionals and media relations professionals now have targeted lists of bloggers they contact or to whom they link stories, because not to do so would be to ignore a growing and important segment of 2005-style "media."

Blogger Behavior: Trust Them When They Say They're a Different Breed

Bloggers like to paint themselves as somewhat different from traditional journalists or writers, so trust them at their word. Given their penchant for outside-the-box attitudes, however, some aspects of the Blogosphere are fairly predictable. Among them:

- Bloggers write about what's interesting to them, not what's interesting to you or your clients. Generally, bloggers don't care if you have a new product or you just won a big-ticket account. Get used to it.
- Blogs are more than posts into an Internet void. They're conversations that build relationships. Readers respond to blog posts either in a comment section or in their own blogs, and readers develop loyalty to certain blogs and their authors. Over time, the writer-reader

relationship feels friendly. The blog becomes a community.

- Always tell the truth and be transparent in the Blogosphere. All that readers know about bloggers is what the bloggers write about and say, and if readers discover that a blogger is passionate about something because he/she is being paid to say so, the results can be disastrous.
- Each blogger has a distinctive voice, and readers are attracted both by what bloggers say and how they say it. Their authority is based in the relationships they develop with readers. The stilted voice of most marketers sounds as inappropriate as a bullhorn at a tea party.
- As the Poynter Institute study of transparency points out, credibility among traditional journalists is based on accuracy, fairness and context. In the Blogosphere, credibility also takes into consideration what the blogger stand for, and bloggers are often much more willing to take a personal stand or express an opinion, while traditional reporters continue to embrace their objectivity. In January, 2005, Harvard University sponsored a two-day program, "Blogging, Journalism and Credibility: Battleground and Common Ground." To learn more, visit the audio transcripts of the conference: http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/webcred/index.php?p=62.
- Blogger authority is defined by key behaviors: how often the blogger posts new content, how much influence or respect he/she earns among other bloggers, and how many other bloggers link to the blog.

WHAT OTHERS SAID ABOUT BLOGS: PRAISE…AND DRAWBACKS

Praise…

"…about 11% of Internet users today are inveterate blog readers, and the blogging scene starts to get mighty compelling for marketers."

Business Week, "The Business of Blogs," Dec. 13, 2004

"Web logs have had an astonishing season this year, enough to freckle the faces of bloggers who do not, as a rule, get much time outdoors. Although political blogs have received the most attention, advertising agencies and communications professionals are using blogs to create discussion about ideas within their industries."

Nat Ives, *New York Times*, Oct. 27, 2004

"If you're not thinking about how to use blogs in your business, you're missing a big opportunity. Blogging can be a remarkably effective marketing tool. It's also an excellent way to stay in touch with customers and hear concerns that can be an early warning system of potential problems…''

B.L. Ochman, Marketingprofs.com, June 29, 2004

"…blogs and Web media, in general, make it possible to have a continuous feedback loop between readers, content creators who are often one and the same. The power of the Web medium to provide instantaneous feedback shapes and influences ideas and stories."

Tobi Elkin, MediaPost, June 18, 2004

"The arrival of e-mail listservs made the first Internet communities possible. Now—with blogs and wikis—we have listservs on steroids."

Dan Forbush, PRNewswire, on GlobalPRBlogWeek.com, July 12, 2004

"The promise of the homepage was that we would have a persistent place that would be our Web presence. Well, now we do. They're called Weblogs. Weblogs are our Web selves, and they're in conversation with others."

David Weinberger, author of JoHo the Blog (http://www.hyperorg.com/blogger) and co-author, *The Cluetrain Manifesto*

"…(bloggers) have the energy of youth (the typical blogger is between 20-26 years old), have fun with it and above all…personal blogs are for them a way of freedom of speech, creativity and knowledge sharing."

Eva Dominquez, August 6, 2004, Poynteronline

"Under specific circumstances—when key Weblogs focus on a new or neglected issue—blogs can act as a focal point for the mainstream media and exert formidable agenda-setting power. Blogs have invited national debates on such topics as racial profiling at airports and have kept the media focused on scandals as diverse as the exposure of CIA agent Valerie Plame's identity to bribery allegations at the United Nations."

Daniel Drezner & Henry Farrell, *Foreign Policy*, November-December 2004

And Drawbacks…

"Words are too powerful to be left in the hands of those who don't appreciate their power."

George Simpson, MediaPost, August 2, 2004

"The blog…can indeed be….fabulous for relationships. But it can also be much more: a company's worst PR nightmare, its best chance to talk with new and old customers, an ideal way to send out information, and the hardest way to control it…Suddenly, everyone's a publisher and everyone's a critic."

David Kirkpatrick and Daniel Roth, *Fortune*, Dec. 27, 2004

"I worked on a school paper when I was a kid and I owned a CB (citizens' band) radio when I lived in Texas. And what I saw in the blogosphere on Nov. 2 (Election Day, 2004) was more reminiscent of that school paper or a 'Breaker, breaker 19' gabfest on CB than anything approaching journalism… Unlike journalists, some blog operators who are quick to trash the mainstream media not only don't care about the veracity of the stories they are spreading, they do not understand when there is a live hand grenade on their keyboard. They appear not to care. Their concern is for controversy and 'hits.' "

Eric Engberg, retired CBS newsman, at CBSNews.com, Nov. 8, 2004

BLOGS THAT WORK… AND BLOGS GONE WRONG

Because they're a new form of communication, blogs have attracted interest from companies, brands, and public relations and advertising agencies.

But bloggers are a population unto themselves, and new bloggers must learn and behave by the rules of the blogging code. Unfortunately, the code isn't written anywhere and varies from site to site, author to author. Perhaps no one summed it up better than Ogilvy & Mather's Steven Hayden, quoted in *Fortune* magazine in January 2005: "If you fudge or lie on a blog, you are biting the karmic weenie. The negative reaction will be so great that, whatever your intention was, it will be overwhelmed and you will be crushed like a bug."

Some corporations, in fact, have deployed blogs beneficially, including Microsoft, IBM, Sun MicroSystems and GM, which use blogs as communications tools among their programmers and the public. Jonathan Schwartz, COO and President of Sun Microsystems explains: "Well over 1,000 (Sun employees) have been given space for blogging. There's no restraint on what they can blog about. We provide tools and expect them to use them responsibly. Restricting what you can write on a blog is the same as restricting what you can say in an e-mail or a phone call. And if they are speaking as an employee, well, we live in a country that values free speech."

Nike used its Art of Speed blog (now archived at http://www.gawker.com/artofspeed/) as a new form of advertisement. While it only was up for several weeks, the blog attracted amazing attention for Nike.

Edelman CEO Richard Edelman was one of the first corporate officers to launch a blog (http://www.edelman.com/speak_up_blog/), and he sees his Speak Up blog as a communication and feedback tool that complements the agency's existing outreach to clients, potential customers, employees and the public. As Steve Rubel, a public relations expert in New York City and author of the MicroPersuasion blog (http://steverubel.typepad.com/micropersuasion/) has noted: "For the first time in the information age, there's a human face on business. Blogging allows you to have a two-way dialogue in a public forum, led by real people. For the first time, public relations means relating with the public."

Blogs gone wrong

But not all company ideas for blogs are great and wonderful things, and several agencies and brands have learned the hard way.

Mazda, for example, didn't fare well in late 2004 with its foray into the Blogosphere. In fact, type the phrase "Mazda blog" into Google or Yahoo!, and the first several results link to marketing Web sites whose headlines proclaim "Mazda's Blog + Viral Campaign Falls Flat" (www.marketingvox.com) and "Mazda Blog Becomes Unstuck" (www.splatt.com). Mazda apparently

figured one online format was as good as another, so it launched a blog featuring three 30-second spots for its Mazda 3, apparently assuming that no one would figure out that the blogs—purported to be authored by anonymous bloggers who "found" incredible videos to share—were sponsored by Mazda's ad agency and that the videos were hosted by an expensive Web-hosting service. That the videos featured Mazda logos only added skepticism to the bloggers' already skeptical views, causing Rick E. Bruner of Business Blog Consulting to comment on his own blog: "Marketers, please, please get the point: blogs are about building trust, not spinning it."

Likewise, bike lock maker Kryptonite found itself unprepared when a bike-forum author in September 2004 posted information—and a step-by-step video—describing how the end of a Bic pen could quickly disable and hack a $50 Kryptonite Evolution 2000 U-Lock. Word of the pen's ability to override the lock spread on the Internet and blogs quicker than Kryptonite's response, and the company eventually had to offer rebates for replacement locks and promised to speed production of hack-proof bikes…losing valuable elements of a reputation built over decades and costing an estimated $10 million in replacement locks.

Transparency, Transparency…and Speed

What went wrong? Pete Blackshaw, CMO of Intelliseek, shares his opinion: "In the first case, Mazda totally ignored the importance of 'transparency.' Corporate blogs are OK, but they must be labeled and identified as such, because if bloggers are anything at all, they're savvy, inherently skeptical, defensive of their medium and able to sniff out imposters quickly. And once they do, they let everyone else know. In the Kryptonite case, the company simply failed to grasp the immediacy and impact that a single online posting—from a blog or other source—could have on an entire corporation. Had it responded more quickly, or had the company had processes in place to pick up that single posting within 24 hours, Krytponite's response might have been quicker and more educated; instead, the company seemed rather blindsided and sluggish in its response."

Those two scenarios illustrate the need for online crisis management in every company because on any given day, a marketer, company spokesperson, CEO or public relations professional may be asked to provide an on-the-spot response to a similar but totally unpredictable situation created and distributed by a blog: a product gone wrong, a campaign uncovered, a flaw exposed, a personality arrested, a video or still photo posted for all the world to see. Who will respond and how? How quickly? In what format? And how well?

BLOG SEGMENTATION: THE EDELMAN & INTELLISEEK TRUST MEDIA BLOG DIRECTORY

Who are the most influential bloggers? Which blogs have the highest readership and levels of trust? Which bloggers speak with the most authority? (see chart: Blog Segmentation)

How were the lists compiled? Potential blog links were identified within 27 blog search engines, including Intelliseek's own BlogPulse.com portal (which analyzes millions of blogs daily), as well as Google, Blogdigger. Blo.gs, Postami, Blogz, DayPop, Popdex, Wapath, Feedster, Bloglines and Blogstreet. Those with high traffic and influence were examined to find additional blog links within each category, and those links further reviewed.

To be included in the directory a blog had to appear in Intelliseek's BlogPulse.com top 12,000 blog lists, have high traffic, high influence (based on readership and/or blogroll links), high numbers of Bloglines subscribers, receive some media coverage and/or meet other subjective standards for blog content. The overall focus of the directory is to provide high-quality links that facilitate access to the most influential blogs within each category.

The complete Trust MEdia Blog Directory is available by special arrangement to Edelman or Intelliseek clients, but profiles of some of the top bloggers include:

Business to Business/Public Relations

Blogger: Steve Rubel, vice president at Cooper Katz in New York City
Blog: Micropersuasion
URL: http://www.micropersuasion.com

About: A source of commentary and a how-to resource for marketers, advertisers and public relations professionals. Rubel offers specialty posts on event blogging, marketing, general blogging, podcasting, shameless promotion, journalism and more, much of it based on others' advice, input or his own 10 years of experience in public relations. An innovative blogger, Rubel spent one week in 2004 getting all his news from blogs and wrote about the experience. He also coordinated 2004's Global PR Marketing Week among like-minded PR bloggers. Has strong metrics across all blogs including high ranking in the Intelliseek 12,000. A true influencer.

Blog Segmentation

The Edelman/Intelliseek 100 Trust MEdia Blog Directory lists top blogs in key verticals based on traffic, influence and other factors that drive them to the top of consciousness in the Blogosphere. A sample of blogs and categories includes:

Overall Top 100	Consumer Technology	Health Care	Marketing/Advertising	Public Relations
Poynter Institute (media)	Engadget	MedPundit	AdLand	Micro Persuasion
Instapundit (politics)	Slashdot	Kevin M.D.	AdRants	Corporate PR
Eschaton (politics/news/issues)	Gizmodo	Waking Up Costs	Wonder Branding	POP!

Business to Business General:

Blogger: Neville Hobson
Blog: Nev On
URL: http://nevon.typepad.com/nevon/investor_relations/

About: Hobson is an independent British communicator based in the Netherlands who offers insights, links and commentary about a variety of business issues and who possesses a special interest in business communications and technology and ways that the latter can facilitate the former. He's been blogging since 2002 and says in his blog biography that he feels he really found his niche in the Blogosphere in 2004.

Consumer Packaged Goods

Blogger: Stephen Bainbridge
Blog: Professor Bainbridge on Wine
URL: http://www.professorbainbridgeonwine.com/

About: A law professor at the University of California at Los Angeles, Bainbridge is also a wine expert who blogs about wine, wineries, wine movies, wine prices—anything wine-related.

Consumer Technology

Blogger: Collective blog by the folks at Slashdot, owned by Open Source Technology Group
Blog: Slashdot
URL: http://slashdot.org/

About: Slashdot is a group blog authored by several techno-experts, and it contains useful information spanning all areas of consumer technology. The blog, in fact, serves as a discussion forum. A post about technology news often draws hundreds of responses, some of them quite biting, and regular contributors can rank responses so that readers can filter them into a readable number. Slashdot is used by hardcore technophiles and virgin newbies alike and is routinely cited by bloggers of all persuasions. The metrics on this site make it a clear technology leader and a place to go for information about technology, electronics, gadgets, etc. Clearly among the top three technology-focused blogs.

HOW TO CONTACT BLOGGERS: NEW RULES OF ENGAGEMENT FOR THE BLOGOSPHERE

How does blogging change what communications professionals do? For one thing, blogging forces new ways of thinking about communicating with bloggers, not only because they represent a new medium but also because their rules of the road differ slightly from those of traditional, mainstream media.

Old-world "pitching"

Until bloggers arrived, pitching the "media" was fairly standard. Journalists received phone calls, e-mails or press kits from public relations firms and spokespeople, usually information that involved a new product, an idea, a campaign, a new angle to an old issue. Information about members of the media was obtained from any number of readily available media atlases, directories and databases: reporters'/producers' names, contact information, beats, outlet, phone number and other pertinent information. Over time, good public relations pros built up relationships

and trust with members of the media. Sometimes, reporters wrote/covered something in response to the pitch, other times they didn't, but the relationship had an air of trust and open communication.

New-world "Contacting"

Today, communications professionals must rely on more upfront homework before they contact both the news media and the blogger. They still rely on lists of credentialed reporters (some of whom are also official bloggers) who cover specific beats, but they also have created lists of bloggers who cover their industry, specialty markets, issues and topics that are relevant to a client's business. Some of the bloggers, they've met in person, and some they've contacted only by e-mail. But when any communications professional is ready to issue a press release or announce a new product, the approach may be scattershot to cover all bases: personal phone calls to mainstream reporters, a few more phone calls or personalized e-mails to targeted and influential bloggers, a few more e-mails to bloggers whose relevance is less immediate, and whatever follow-up is needed. Spam is always at the back of any communication professionals' mind, and care must be taken about who to contact, how to contact them and how frequently.

But what hasn't changed is the "relations" part of the public/media relations role. That still remains the most important element of the task at hand.

Hence, these tips for engaging with bloggers:

- Read the blog. Try to understand what and why the readers like the blog site.
- Bloggers write about only what's interesting to them, so connect with the blog author by sharing information that his or her readers might appreciate.
- Engage with the blogger on topics he or she has raised, thus establishing the relationship first.
- Don't wear out your welcome. Make choices about who to contact, when to contact, and how frequently.
- As with mainstream media writers, what's important are the relationship and trust developed over time.
- Provide information, kernels, links, and other resources; don't just shower bloggers with canned press releases. Instead of sending a press release as a Word document, for example, send only the link to the press release on the company Web site. Send links to existing news stories, blog entries, videos, audio recordings or other resources that bloggers so love to share.
- Beware of spam. Contact bloggers judiciously, always conscious that everyone likes as little spam as possible. (Comment sections on blogs already are being targeted by traditional spam, so don't add to the fray).
- Be honest and transparent about your motives and intentions. Make sure the blogger knows you are a marketing or PR professional.
- Read the blog author's "rules of contact." Honor "do not call" requests. If a blogger makes it clear that he/she no longer

wants to hear from you (whether by phone or e-mail), remove the name from your list.

- Choose the best person to engage with bloggers. Bloggers might prefer to also talk to someone in the company directly involved in the product, news, issue or event rather than with a spokesperson.
- Like all writers and reporters, bloggers like being first…with an insight, an angle, the actual news, etc. Spread around your "tips" and "exclusives" so that no one feels slighted.

TO BLOG OR NOT TO BLOG: KEY QUESTIONS FOR MARKETERS AND COMMUNICATIONS PROFESSIONALS

Many companies have very simple questions: Should we have a blog? If so, what kind should it be? Who should maintain it? What should its purpose be? What will we use it for?

Frankly, the questions go far deeper than the basic ones, and we provide this list to help business and communications professionals think intelligently about blogs and blog strategies.

1. Are you willing to engage in a dialogue with your public?
2. What is your strategy for becoming an advocate with your consumers?
3. Does your company have a blog policy? If so, do your employees know about it?
4. Do your company's employees contribute to blogs on your company's Web site? On their own Web sites? Does your company have a policy about employees authoring their own blogs? Do employees know about such a policy?
5. Does your company's communications agency have a blog strategy? Does the agency take blogs seriously? If it has a policy, do you know what it is? Has one been crafted for or presented to your company?
6. If your company has a blog, does anyone pay attention to how many hits it receives, who links to it and what kind of comments it receives?
7. Do you know how many times your company or brand was mentioned in blogs and in communication forums in the last year? Quarter? Month?
8. Does your company monitor blogs and online conversations to determine what's being said? Who handles the task, and how often? What kind of data is collected, and who receives it?
9. If your company monitors blogs and other online conversations, does it also have a protocol for responding to negative information it finds? Who responds? What event(s) triggers such a response?
10. Does your company know whether existing consumers or critics—some of whom already might be in your customer database—are active bloggers or influential bloggers? (e.g., do you ask them questions about their blogging behavior when you interact with them in order to find out their level of blog activity?)
11. Do you understand the differences between the types of bloggers, e.g., credentialed media bloggers vs. consumer bloggers?

12. If financial analysts, media representatives and other outsiders are researching your company, do you know which blogs they consult?

13. When you launch a new product, event or campaign, does your company have a strategy for presenting the information to bloggers?

14. Because blogs are so easy to publish, has anyone determined whether certain elements of the blog-publishing format should or could be easily adapted for your company Web site?

15. Are you willing to enter the world of blogging with honesty, frankness and humor? If you cannot get past "marketing speak" and defensiveness, then do not blog.

The Do's and Don'ts of Blogging in General

Do's:

- Advertise on key blogs if doing so is relevant
- Be subtle, relevant and targeted when you engage with blogs and bloggers. Familiarize yourself with the writer's subject, tone and style.
- Keep a two-way relationship with the blogger…provide input, provide content, provide feedback
- Keep your blog postings and comments short and relevant.
- Realize that whatever you post, or whatever comment you add to another's blog, has the potential to be indexed by a search engine, such that it could become the first piece of content Internet users find when they search for your company, brand or the particular issue under discussion.
- Tell the truth. It is best to get the truth out into the Blogosphere and keep attention focused on it if you think bloggers are unfairly spreading misinformation. Respond quickly, with the facts and with respect. Provide contact information for yourself or other people they can speak to or interview.
- Understand that as "comment spam" increases, more blogs will place restrictions on commenting, either through required registration or filtering mechanisms that scan for spam before publishing comments.
- Realize that timely purchases of keywords on Google AdWords Select or other paid search ad vehicles can be very effective very quickly (and sometimes are very inexpensive) if you get them at the moment of hatching.

Don'ts:

- Get drawn into a fight, especially if a blog contains information that makes you unhappy, nervous or angry. Do your best to respond with the truth, both on the blog and on your company's Web site.
- Alienate the blogging universe with unfounded criticism or slams
- Lie about who you are or post a "fake" blog that's intended to serve as an advertising or marketing vehicle. You'll be shot down almost as soon as you click on the "publish" or "post comment" link.
- Be anonymous or pretend to be someone you're not. They'll find you out.
- Use "seeding," which is the practice where people who really don't have a passion for your company, brand or issue are hired to promote it nonetheless. These seeding individuals and firms are paid to post comments or conversations on blogs and aren't transparent about it.
- Get wordy. Most blog posts are short on words and heavy with lots of links to other content.
- Post a comment that sounds like an advertisement. If you're engaging as a representative of your company or agency, identify yourself as such, offer to help or answer questions, and include links to Web sites, FAQ's or other simple resources.

Blogging Terms you Absolutely Need to Know

The Blogosphere can be a strange place until you get used to how it works and the jargon that feeds it. This short lexicon of blog-related terms will help you understand it:

Adverblog: Short for "advertising blog," a blog used for advertising

Aggregator: A piece of software, often free, that automatically gathers RSS-based summaries of a set of user-selected blogs for easy browsing

Astroturfing: "Fake grassroots" that happens when an agenda-driven organization, agency, think tank, government agency, etc. pays people to say good things about it without revealing that they're getting paid

Burst/Bursty: The tendency of an issue, phrase or person to "burst" briefly into awareness because of a mention in the blogosphere

Blogosphere: The universe of bloggers and blogs

Credentialed blog: A Web log authored by a "credentialed" member of the news media or analyst community

Comment Spam: A fairly new phenomenon in which spammers post fake comments on blogs and embed within their comments links to spam sites for porn, prescription drugs, gambling, etc.

Groupblog: A blog written and maintained by a group of authors; also a collective or collaborative blog

Hyperlink/Link: A URL/link that is included to another source where readers can find more information or perspective. Often, bloggers provide only a summary of information and offer the link for those who want to click on it to read more

Podcast: An audio (or occasionally video) recording posted on a blog (or Web site) and syndicated via RSS

Moblog: Short for "mobile blog," a blog that contains posts made from a mobile device, typically a cell phone

Post/Posting: The content a blogger enters on a blog is called a "post," and the act of publishing it is called "posting"

Really Simple Syndication (RSS): The technology by which blogs syndicate their posts throughout the Internet community

Trackback: An automatic feature of some blog software programs that allows a blogger to determine who has linked to an original post

Vlog: Short for "video blog," a publishing platform for the distribution of videos

Wiki: An online page that any viewer can edit. The online encyclopedia Wikipedia is a well-known wiki.

XML: Extensible Markup Language, a format that computers use to share/exchange data on the World Wide Web

If you want to learn more about conversation auditing, and consider how blogs might or might not work for your company, brand and employees, contact:

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Next in Edelman's series on New Communications & Word-of-Mouth Marketing, we'll look at the nature of employee blogs. Blogs are not only a powerful tool for companies and public relations professionals to communicate with their key stakeholders, but also are a mechanism used for employees to communicate with customers, the general public and with each other.

We'll evaluate examples of employee blogs and employee-focused blogs, and how companies are coping with this new form of internal and external communication. From creating policies about blogs, to providing platforms for employees to create their own blogs, companies are taking various approaches to handle this emerging trend.

In addition, we'll share our point of view on the pros and cons of employee blogging and how blogging might help your organization be more productive in its communications practices.

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ABOUT INTELLISEEK

http://www.intelliseek.com

Intelliseek provides business intelligence solutions that transform unstructured data, including consumer-generated media that appears in Internet forums, boards, blogs and other venues, into actionable insights for marketers, companies and brands. Intelliseek's platform technology adds structure, relevance and meaning to unstructured data in multiple sources and formats, transforming it into easy-to-interpret desktop reports and alerts. Available as a marketing intelligence application (BrandPulse™) and enterprise software (Enterprise Discovery Suite™), Intelliseek's products help speed and deepen consumer understanding, product research and competitive analysis. Its newly launched BlogPulse™ (www.blogpulse.com) tracks issues and trends in millions of blogs. Intelliseek maintains headquarters in Cincinnati, with sales and support offices in New York, California and Washington D.C., and the Applied Research Center in Pittsburgh.

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