

Why Blogs Are Effective for Online Reputation Management

When your company or your name is being bombarded with negative commentary, fast response time can make the difference when your reputation is on the line. One of the most effective tools in your arsenal is going to be blogging.

The term “weblog” was coined in 1997 and in May 1999 was shortened to blog. Long thought to be useful only as a personal journal or as a news reporting tool, blogging has become the most popular means of getting your message out to the Internet quickly. There are several reasons why blogging works so well for online reputation management:

- A blog posting can be created and pinged (alerting search engines) so that the major search engines crawl the content within *minutes*. A website has no counterpart that gives such fast indexing results and it often takes months before a search engine crawls the website for new content or changes. The value in having your blog crawled quickly is in the linked keyword text that will lead the search engines back to the core website for further indexing sooner and provide recognition for the relevance to those keywords in your site.
- Search engine recognition is more quickly established for both the blog and the company’s core website. Because of the pinging technique, once a blog posting is published, the search engine is alerted and both the blog and the sites that are linked from the blog are given search weight. Often it takes only minutes for the posting to be indexed by Google and other major search engines. Changes to a website, however, are acknowledged only in the next indexing update from the search engines and that may take months.
- A blog is quicker to develop and can be used permanently or temporarily. This allows a company to respond quickly to a crisis and when the issues have passed, remove the blog from view. Or create an auxiliary point of presence to expand the corporate message. Control is the keyword here for web presence.
- An interactive environment is provided in the blog mechanism. If the company is open to receiving comments on their postings, the viewer can post a comment relevant to the content. The beauty of this is that the company can choose to moderate the comments before allowing them to be publically viewed. Again, this control factor is valuable in maintaining open communication with the visitors. Derogatory or irrelevant information can be blocked while information that needs to be shared can be allowed.

- Given the complexity of most websites, often a company is unable to quickly respond to issues through their website due to the layers of technical people needed to make changes. A blog can be company-maintained and moderated with little training. Please note that if reputation management is the reason for the blog's existence, content should be carefully screened before posting to the blog.

The more often a blog posting occurs, the more alerts can be sent to the search engines and the more frequently a search engine will crawl your blogs and websites. This can be an advantage in both delivering your message countering the negative commentary as well as building more online awareness to increase business competitiveness.

Understand that blogging is not a replacement for a website but rather an adjunct to an existing web presence or a boost for building a new presence online. It is still recommended that a company provide a core website for visitors interested in your products and services. Think of the blog as the "fan club" that send visitors to your website. The value from putting a little extra work into a supporting blog will show up in increased traffic, a counter to negativity, and additional positioning in search engine results pages. Do it right and you can reverse that negative online reputation in a relatively short period of time.

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