

The Bloggin' Expert – Become the Go-To-Guy or Gal in Your Industry

Let's face it, blogs are hot. It seems like everyone has a blog. Whether it's for fun, business or to speak out on issues. If you don't know what a blog is it a "web log" or an online journal of sorts. My blog is located at <http://www.aliceseba.com> and you see sequential entries I made into my journal and you can even leave comments there.

You can start a blog for free at:

- è <http://www.blogger.com> (You host your blog on their servers or your own. I use blogger and host on my own server)
- è <http://www.wordpress.org> is a program you can use on your own server
- è There are others, but personally, I am mostly familiar with Blogger.

Anyway...let's not worry about technology, let's talk about marketing your business with your blog. A blog is the ultimate way for you to become an expert in your field. The concept may be scary, as you may not feel you are an expert in anything (Of course, I know that is totally untrue!) or you may not know how to effectively convey your expertise. Well, let's cover a few basics before we discuss how blogs can help you become an expert in your field:

Why do you need to be an expert?

- It helps build trust in you, your knowledge and your products
- It encourages referrals from those who benefit from your knowledge
- It builds a long term relationship with your current and future customers

Best of all, sharing your knowledge doesn't have to cost anything. It does take time and effort, but your efforts will be worth it in the long run. Soon you will be the go-to guy or gal in your industry.

What Kind of Expert are You?

It never fails to happen. Almost every time I suggest to someone that they should become an "expert" in their field, they laugh and say, "I'm not an expert at anything." Well, let's banish that thought from your head right now.

There is a reason you chose to sell your product or service. It's because you have a passion for it and you know all about that product or service. If you don't...you may have bigger problems to consider. L

But seriously, think about what kind of information you can offer people in your target market? I'll give you a few examples:

- **Office Cleaning Service Provider:** Teaching business owners how to maintain their offices to reduce their office cleaning bills. You may think, "Geez, I don't want to make less money from my clients." You're right, you want to make more money. So, look at this way...if you can save your client \$1000 a year in cleaning expenses, you have one happy customer. That happy customer will gladly refer other happy customers to you. It's a win-win situation.
- **Retailer of Baby Products:** Become the parenting expert; education expert or product review expert. Parents need all the help they can get. Be there to provide it for them.
- **Gift Basket Maker:** Corporate gift-giving immediately comes to mind. You don't just have to talk about what kinds of gifts to give, but teach businesses how to establish and maintain customer relationships with giving of all kinds.

Okay, you get the picture. Just brainstorm a little about what you do know and you'll see a need for your expertise.

Why a Blog? There are So Many Other Tools that Can Help Me Become an Expert

Your blog is the ultimate tool in conveying your knowledge and opinions to your customers and prospects. Of course, you can use other tools, but there are always some drawbacks:

- The Message Board or Forum is Just a Stepping Stone:

Let's face it, everyone on a message board sees themselves as an expert and battles ensue when opinions conflict. Of course, that's not to say, you can't establish yourself as an expert on a message board...OF COURSE you can. It's a great place to get exposure, but if you can turn some of those message board members into your regular blog readers, you'll do even better.

A message board is focused on "community" and most people who visit a forum will probably never see your bits of wisdom. However, if someone visits your blog, the focus is entirely on you. Your visitors are immediately inspired by your bits of wisdom and you gain an immediate following. Sound good to me.

Important Message Board Lesson: If you use message boards to convey your expertise, funnel some of that message board traffic into your blog. Hopefully, you can list your blog in your signature line or can reference your blog, when appropriate, in message

board posts. Your not trying to “sell” anything to these people, just show them that you are a source of knowledge.

- Going Beyond the One-Sided Email Newsletter:

Don't get us wrong, you need to have a way to communicate with your website visitors by email. Despite the fact that spam filters are shutting out email and people experience email volume overload...email will still be one of your most valuable marketing weapons.

When a visitor comes to your site the first time, the chances that she'll buy from you are pretty minimal. You need to establish a relationship with that person. Don't rely on someone “bookmarking” your site for later reference and coming back. Let's be serious, we all have so many bookmarks we couldn't possibly get back to all of them. Therefore, you must attempt to collect the email addresses of every visitor that comes to your website. A sign up box and a compelling reason to sign up for your mailing list on EVERY single page of your main website is a MUST.

The same goes for your blog. Sure, some people will prefer to sign up for your RSS feed...but many people will not know what an RSS feed, let alone know how to use one. Place a mailing list subscription box on EVERY page of your blog too.

So, if you have an email mailing list, why do you need a blog? It's simple, to make that personal connection. With a blog, you give your subscribers and visitors an opportunity to interact with you. You can also publish on a moment's notice or every day, if you'd like. You just can't “bug” people via email like that. But those who are really interested in what you have to say, will be checking your blog very frequently. You can also publish your email newsletter on your blog and invite feedback.

Important Email Newsletter Lesson: Continue build that mailing list --- it is incredibly important --- but be sure to increase that connection with a blog that shows you as a “touchable” individual with lots of information to share.

- Press Releases & Your Own Blogging Media Outlet

If you don't already know, press releases are newsworthy stories (about one or two pages) that you send out to various media outlets, in the hopes that they'll interview you or just publish your release as is. Press releases are AWESOME to gain exposure, increase your credibility and elevate your profile as an expert....if they get picked up by the media.

Of course, if you create a great publicity campaign, you will be get your share of publicity. Nobody is disputing that. But now there is no need to get discouraged when a few of your press releases end up in the editor's trash can.

Why?

Because you are your own media outlet --- your own "online newspaper". You can publish all your press release stories on your own blog. You can share your news with the world, within seconds. Of course, if you are trying to stay "personal and touchable" to your blog readers, you'll want to edit your press release into a less formal documents...but you get the picture, right?

Important Press Releases Lesson : Publish all your newsworthy events on your blog. If the traditional newspapers and TV programs don't want to share your story --- with one click of your mouse, you can share your story with the world.

Extra Tip : Remember, blogs don't have to be just about blogging. A blogging program is an ideal format to use for the media section of your website. It makes it easy for you to add press releases and keep the media updated of current events on your website.

For more information on starting a press release campaign and setting up your media page, consult <http://www.pressreleaseprofits.com> (to be released January 2005), a website owner's guide to publicity.

Immediately Capture Your Audience with Your Intelligence & Knowledge

Although your blog is a "sales tool", it is not the place to ad your "sales message" every single day. People get pretty tired of a constant sales pitch and will see little value in your blog.

Your posts should enlighten your reader and provide them with new information. The posts don't need to be long...and really, if you want to keep their attention, keep it short, sweet and to the point! They just need to contain a little nugget that will make your reader say, "Boy, I'm glad I read this entry today."

But hey...you are here to make money, so you need your readers to know that you have something to sell too. You can set up your blog with a "blogroll" that shows all your websites and offerings. That will help for certain. But most people will read the content of your entry and then move on. They may not look at the navigation on the sides or bottom. They're in a hurry and once they have your info, they'll be clicking off somewhere else.

- First of all, you are always encouraging your visitors to sign up for your newsletter. Then you can deliver offers to them via email, intermixed with good tidbits of information. This way, you'll **stay in touch with your blog readers** who don't use an RSS feed or those who prefer email.

- Next, you'll "**m ention**" **your products or services in your blog posts**, where appropriate....and then you make an active **hyperlink** to them. Of course, this is really a soft sell..but that's okay. A blog is not about the hard sell. People are there to be informed and when they see a link to another resource in a "news story" (i.e. your blog entry), they are very likely to click on it. They aren't suspicious that it's an ad. It's just extra information.

- Here's an example of how to casually "mention" your products in your blog:

January 8, 2005

Today, we were working a new [chocolate covered cherry flavor](#) for our ice cream mixes, when we realized that I didn't have anyone test out the flavors for me. How absolutely silly of us. Sure, we love the taste, but I need the expert opinion of other ice cream lovers.

We're guessing that you, my friends, love ice cream too. If you'd like to be our product tester, [email us](#) and we'll send you out a sample. We'd love your feedback before we launch this product to the general public.

So what does the above example do:

1. It connects us with our audience because it shows that we value their opinion, plus we're willing to share information with them prior to our sharing it to the rest of the world with a product launch.
2. It asks our reader to interact with us by requesting a sample; thus, forming a stronger relationship
3. It also mentions our upcoming product and makes it clear that we have something for sale.

There's just a few ideas to get you started. Remember, if you start a blog it doesn't have to take up all your time. It's just a simple way to get your informative thoughts out to people who love listening to what you have to say. And believe me, those people are out there!

Further Recommended Blogging Resources:

> **RSS Exposed** - <http://aliceseba.com/rss-exposed>

Paul Short's full-detailed; easy-to-understand guide to blogging, syndication & getting your content read.

> **R ick B utts' B lg & P ing S trategy** – <http://aliceseba.com/blogandping>
Get your expert content listed in search engines

Good luck,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alice Seba". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alice Seba

<http://www.AliceSeba.com>