



# B2B BLOGGING TRENDS IN 2011

**Authors:** Tony Karrer and Tom Pick

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Tony Karrer and Tom Pick

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**TONY  
KARRER**

### LETTER FROM TONY

Tom Pick and I have had the good fortune to work together to create two great sites: The B2B Marketing Zone and Social Media Informer. These two sites bring together amazing content from top sources (mostly bloggers) in their respective fields. One of the common themes the past few months among bloggers participating in these sites has been how 2011 is shaping up to be a pivotal year in the world of B2B blogging.

Because of that, Tom and I decided to bring together the best thought leaders on B2B blogging to answer some key questions:

- What do you see as key trends in B2B Blogging for 2011?
- If you've not started a blog yet, is 2011 the year to do so? Why or why not?
- Will anything be different in 2011 in marketing your business blog?

- What new challenges might exist in 2011 around B2B blogging?

We've pulled together these contributions and extracted key ideas and trends.

If your company sells to businesses (B2B), then we believe the information provided by these experts will be very important to you.

We hope you enjoy this report.

If you find value here, please let your peers know about the report.

<http://www.aggregage.com/b2b-blogging-2011>

And we certainly welcome your thoughts and ideas.

**Tony Karrer**  
CTO & Founder, Aggregage



## SUMMARY

We've extracted the key themes among the responses and identified a few clear trends for 2011.

 **JAY  
BAER**

*“The biggest trend I see for B2B blogging next year is increased adoption. As more B2B marketers confront the constant need to fuel the demands for content, blogging can give them the edge.”*

## B2B BLOGGING GROWING

As **Tom Pick** points out:

Given the increasing popularity of inbound / content marketing (and the declining effectiveness of advertising), more companies will start blogs in 2011. And given that *less than half of B2B companies currently have blogs*, there's considerable room for growth.

The data on adoption of blogs is pretty clear: there's lots of opportunity for more B2B organizations to adopt blogging. And as you read through these responses, the key value propositions of blogging will become more clear.

That's why we see folks like **Jay Baer** saying:

2011 will be the year that the B2B companies widely recognize the importance of having a viable blog.

Or as **Kristin Zhivago** puts it:

If you don't have a corporate blog, you are way behind the curve.

 **JOHN  
SONNHALTER**

*“Blogging has become an accepted part of the online media landscape.”*

 **HARRY  
HOOVER**

*“In 2011, we'll see an increase B2B blogging.”*

 **ERIK  
QUALMAN**

*“B2B Blogging will catch-up.”*

## SUMMARY

### HIGH VALUE FROM B2B BLOGGING

It should be apparent to most organizations that sell B2B that there's high value from blogging. **Jeff Ogden** captures it well:

Blogging positions the company as a thought leader, an expert. It is also ideal for search – frequent updates vs. static websites.

**Jeff** points to thought leadership and search; Yann Ropars cited the same two elements along with:

inbound blogger outreach.

All of this is based on larger trends around marketing. Several of the bloggers cited the fact that traditional marketing is becoming less effective. **Blake Landau** captures this nicely:

As push marketing becomes less effective – blogs become more important.

And the bottom line for B2B blogging is really the bottom line for B2B businesses.

**Roxanne Darling** points out that there's a:

direct correlation between blogging and B2B customer acquisition

**SCOTT  
GILLUM**

“Blogs are vital when customers search for product information.”

**SAMIR  
BALWANI**

“Aside from possibly publishing a book, nothing proves expertise better than a strong blog.”

**JOHN  
SONNHALTER**

“Blogging is free, lets you establish your brand and thought leadership.”

**TOM  
PICK:**

“Blogging and PR are natural allies.”



## SUMMARY

### BLOGS NEED TO BE INTEGRATED

One of the common themes in responses was the need to think of blogging as an integrated part of the overall marketing and communications plan for the organization. Tony Zambito tells us that in 2011:

B2B organizations will need to not treat blogging as an afterthought delegated to a remote part of their organization. It will need to be incorporated into an overall marketing communications plan.

The blog is a very important communication channel and is often the hub for social media activity by B2B organizations. However, as **J-P De Clerck** points out:

It's not about the media, the channels, the formats etc. It's about the holistic experience. It's integrated.

At the same time, a blog should not get too mired in approval cycles. Ideally blogging remains the voice of the individuals involved so that it can be seen somewhat as a part of a mix of communication paths. **Maddie Grant** sees the mix of blogging and other communication channels as a very important trend for 2011:

2011 – Key Trend – Better understanding of and mix of official and unofficial public sites.

**CHRIS ABRAHAM:**

“The blog will need to be part of an integrated marketing and communications plan.”

**JAY BAER:**

“Social media is more important in B2B than B2C.”

**TOM PICK:**

“2011 ... Greater integration of blogging with other marketing activities.”

## SUMMARY

### OPPORTUNITY TO START B2B BLOGGING IN 2011

As noted above, fewer than 50% of B2B companies have blogs. There are various reasons holding them back and we'll try to tackle some of them below. One of the common questions we hear is: does it still make sense to start a blog? Has the opportunity passed us by? The common answer from these experts was captured well by **Tony Zambito**:

2011 is a good year to start a blog because there is still room to focus on specific topics and issues relevant to certain industries.

But there was caution from many of the experts such as **Chris Abraham**:

Only start blogging if you are going to get it right.

That said, if you follow the advice from these experts, there's fairly universal agreement that you can find a great opportunity to reach your audience through a blog.

 **SAMIR  
BALWANI**

“Without a doubt, 2011 is the year to start a blog.”

 **ARDATH  
ALBEE**

“Get moving now.”



## SUMMARY

### B2B BLOGGING – YOU NEED TO DO IT BETTER

One of the key trends emerging from these experts is that—because of the high value of B2B blogging and because there's still plenty of room to grow— the overall trend will be towards more B2B Blogs. **But Jay Baer** suggests that the trend in 2011 is an:

Explosion of bad B2B Blogs

So, if you have a B2B Blog or are starting a B2B Blog, **Erik Goldman** tells us you:

Have to be good to get above noise.

How do you get above the noise and differentiate yourself? There are lots of great answers to that question provided by the experts in their responses. Several experts cited the need to start by listening and engaging first, then blogging after you've done that:

1. Need to listen first.  
**ERIK QUALMAN**

2. Social Monitoring is important.  
**ERIC GOLDMAN**

Of course, you need to be highly focused on your audience, their interests and needs, and how you can provide value to them.

1. Blogs need to be customer focused.  
**KRISTIN ZHIVAGO**

**TONY ZAMBITO**

“There will be a weeding out of blogs that cannot offer consistent content value.”

**ARDATH ALBEE**

“Don't be me-too.”

**CECE LEE**

“2011 - Move from broadcasting to insights and commentary.”



## SUMMARY

2. Focus on narrow audience.  
**HARRY HOOVER**

3. B to B marketers to be successful in the world of blogging, you must be focused on your target market.  
**JOHN SONNHALTER**

 **J-P DE CLERCK**

“Move from Monologues to Dialogues.”

And you need to recognize that it's a conversation, not a one-way broadcast:

4. More personalized interaction.  
**JEFF KORHAN**

5. Move from Monologues to Dialogues  
**J-P DE CLERCK**

6. The challenge to this is in finding blog contributors who understand conversational marketing and customer service.  
**ROXANNE DARLING**

A few other recommendations that jumped out:

7. Story-telling is important.  
**BLAKE LANDAU**

8. Companies need to move to blogs that have the face of an employee rather than of the brand.  
**BLAKE LANDAU**





## SUMMARY

9. Commercialization of blogs may make them less credible.  
SCOTT GILLUM

ARDATH  
ALBEE  
“Short is good.”

## CURATION

Several of the experts note that one of the primary challenges for blogging is the effort involved in content creation on a regular basis. One of the clear trends of 2011 is the importance of curation - finding and filtering content that will be interesting to your audience. Bloggers don't necessarily need to produce vast quantities of original content so much as they need to collect together the best from thought leaders. **Yann Ropars** Captures it this way:

Bloggging allows brands to cut through the social media clutter and this will become increasingly important as 2011 is often cited as the year of 'curation'.

What does this mean in practice? Well, you're looking at one example of curation right now. This white paper collects the thoughts of these experts.





## TOM PICK

### About the author

■ **Tom Pick (@TomPick)** is an online marketing executive with *KC Associates*, a marketing and PR firm in Minneapolis, Minnesota, focused on B2B technology clients. He's also the award-winning writer of the *Webbiquity blog*, which focuses on B2B lead generation and Web presence optimization -- the fusion of SEO, search marketing, social media, content marketing and interactive PR.



Blog: <http://www.webbiquity.com>



Twitter: @TomPick

First, given the increasing popularity of inbound / content marketing (and the declining effectiveness of advertising), more companies will start blogs in 2011. And given that *less than half of B2B companies currently have blogs*, there's considerable room for growth. But that's obvious and not the most interesting trend.

What's more interesting will be the trend toward greater integration of blogging with other marketing activities. The most obvious integration is with social media (e.g., promoting blog posts through Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and social bookmarking sites), and the majority of business bloggers already get that. The more untapped integration points, and those that will increase in usage in 2011, are PR and email.

BLOGGING AND PR ARE NATURAL ALLIES; both are focused more on brand-building, image enhancement and influence building than direct selling. It would be poor form to simply republish a press release in a blog post, but there's nothing wrong with linking to one where appropriate. Press releases can

also help with blog SEO by providing text links back to specific, supplemental blog posts. And why not write press releases a bit more like blog posts; make them actually informative rather than just announcements about your new product or customer? Finally, blasting your press releases out to other bloggers is annoying and largely ineffective—but offering to write a guest post for an influential blogger in your industry can be a win-win for both parties.

Blogging and email marketing also work well together. I'm surprised when I hear marketers tell me they don't have time to maintain a company blog—but they do regularly publish an email newsletter. If you only have time for one, a blog is easier to maintain. And if you have time for both, a blog can serve as the natural repository for newsletter content. Blogs and newsletters can also be used for cross-promotion, increasing the audience for both.

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allies.”

“  
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reposito-  
tory for  
newsletter  
content.”





# TONY ZAMBITO

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **Tony Zambito**, Founder and Principal of *Goal Centric*, a customer and buyer strategy firm based on a goal-centered approach to buyer experience innovation. Goal Centric is also the originator of the buyer persona methodology and Tony is the author of the ebook *10 Rules for Buyer Persona Development*. He has served as a member of senior management teams with TRW, Knight-Ridder, and Compaq where he worked with many of today's leading Fortune 100 companies.

 **Blog:** <http://www.thebuyerexperience.com>

 **Twitter:** @TonyZambito

## WHAT DO YOU SEE AS KEY TRENDS IN B2B BLOGGING FOR 2011?

I believe that B2B blogging will become more refined and specialized. This in response to B2B buyers seeking more informative content that helps them to make decisions respective to strategies and addressing challenging issues. In general, there will be a weeding out of blogs that cannot offer consistent content value directly related to their initiatives and business problems.

If you've not started a blog yet, is 2011 the year to do so? Why or why not?

2011 is a good year to start a blog because there is still room to focus on specific topics and issues relevant to certain industries. If your business and expertise can add value in your specific industries, it is a good time.

“There will be a weeding out of blogs that cannot offer consistent content value.”

## WILL ANYTHING BE DIFFERENT IN 2011 IN MARKETING YOUR BUSINESS BLOG?

Yes, more effort will be made to tightly integrate blogging with website presence. Blog-

ging is become a new form of brand identity for B2B companies and not having such a presence can be a competitive disadvantage.

## WHAT NEW CHALLENGES MIGHT EXIST IN 2011 AROUND B2B BLOGGING?

The challenge will be in the proliferation of blogs over the past two years. The question of how to stand out from the literally thousands and thousands of blogs is a very significant challenge. Offering consistent high value content will be challenging since it takes time, resources, and intense work to keep a blog up in my opinion. B2B organizations will need to not treat blogging as an afterthought delegated to a remote part of their organization. It will need to be incorporated into an overall marketing communications plan.

“Tightly integrate blogging with website presence.”



## JEFF OGDEN

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ I'm known as the Fearless Competitor, an expert in B2B marketing and lead generation.



Blog: <http://fearlesscompetitor.net>



Twitter: [@fearlesscomp](https://twitter.com/fearlesscomp)

**B**logging positions the company as a thought leader, an expert. It is also ideal for search – frequent updates vs. static websites. Figuring out how to deliver on those goals will be huge in 2011.

Start blogging in 2011? It's easy and almost free. Why not? But some of us are not great writers.

Make sure you don't forget about: Contacting other related bloggers, using social networks, harnessing partners, it all changes.

“  
Make sure you don't forget about: Contacting other related bloggers.”

What new challenges might exist in 2011 around B2B blogging?

Do you use more video? Shorter blog articles? How can you get more comments and sharing?





## HOWARD SEWELL

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **Howard J. Sewell** is President of Spear Marketing Group, a full-service B2B marketing agency, and a 20-year B2B marketing veteran. He writes on demand generation, direct marketing, and lead management at his blog, The Point ([www.spearmarketing.com/blog](http://www.spearmarketing.com/blog)).



**Blog:** <http://www.spearmarketing.com/blog>



**Twitter:** @HJSewell

### KEY TRENDS IN B2B BLOGGING IN 2011

**2011** may be the year when B2B companies finally realize blogs are more than just a PR vehicle for propagating so-called thought leadership. Specifically, smart B2B marketers will wake up to the fact that blogs can also be prime sources of a) search traffic, and b) net new sales leads. Here are 3 key principles we preach to our blog clients:

1. Title blog posts with Google search results in mind. Ask yourself – if someone saw the title of this post and nothing more, would he/she want to read more?

“Title blog posts with Google search results in mind.”

white papers and archived webinars, labeled as “additional resources.”

2. Forego standard, out-of-the-box sidebar widgets like tag clouds and “categories” in favor of content that actually gets people to engage with your company – for example, links to gated content like

3. For pete’s sake, make sure it’s easy for someone to subscribe to the blog. Provide options for RSS, Twitter, and email and place them prominently where the casual visitor

can see them. The more subscribers you generate, the more your blog becomes a way to nurture and cultivate potential customers.

“Make sure it’s easy for someone to subscribe to the blog.”





## JOHN SONNHALTER

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **John Sonnhalter** is the founder of Sonnhalter a marketing communications firm that specializes in reaching professional tradesmen in the Construction, Industrial and MRO markets. He can be reached at [jsonnhalter@sonnhalter.com](mailto:jsonnhalter@sonnhalter.com) and his blog is [www.tradesmeninsights.com](http://www.tradesmeninsights.com)



Blog: <http://www.tradesmeninsights.com>



Twitter: [@Johnsonnhalter](https://twitter.com/Johnsonnhalter)

**B**logs can be a very important part of your social media strategy. I use it as the hub of all other activity and get more hits to it than our website. It's never too late to start blogging. If you're thinking about doing a blog, here are a few things to consider first, both pros and cons.

- Pros-it's free, lets you establish your brand and thought leadership
- Cons-Time consuming, anything you put out there will be there forever.

“The opportunity for you to build thought leadership and branding is better served by blogs.”

Blogs are still a very effective way of reaching an audience, especially if you're in a niche market. While it may be true that social networks and microblogs have outpaced the traditional blog, the opportunity for you to build thought leadership and branding is better served by blogs.

More than 50% of web users will read blogs this year. According to *eMarketer*, by 2014, 150 million Americans, or 60% of the population of the U.S., will be reading blogs. Blogging has

become an accepted part of the online media landscape and blogging is easy to do.

“Trends in blog reading are expected to maintain an upward course as blogs continue to gain influence in mainstream media,” said Paul Verna, a senior analyst with eMarketing and author of *“The Blogosphere: Colliding with Social and Mainstream Media.”*

B to B marketers to be successful in the world of blogging, you must be focused on your target market. A blog should be central to your company's social media strategy for new business. What fuels the engine to this strategy is good content. You must consistently feed your inbound marketing machine with rich content or you will see a slow-down in traffic, search engine results and prospective client leads.

“You must consistently feed your inbound marketing machine with rich content.”

### HERE ARE MY 6 TIPS TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE WITH YOUR BLOGGING:

- 1 To be successful, you need to write a lot.** The more posts you add to your blog, the more traffic you'll get. The more content can also fuel repurposing content through other





## JOHN SONNHALTER

social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. No content = no fuel = no traffic = no new business leads.

**2 Be consistent.** To keep writing, I visualize someone walking to the end of their driveway to pick up the morning paper, only to discover there's nothing there. That helps me to stay motivated to write 2 to 3 posts per week. My readers know what to expect. I want to give them a reason to consistently come back.

**3 Write concisely.** People are busy. They need your content to be easy to digest. Provide them with the Readers Digest version. Make your content easy to scan, provide bullet points and numbered lists. People will be much more interested in what you have to say if you don't try and fluff it up.

**4 Use your analytics.** Know what your readers care about and what they respond to. It will help you to connect with your audience. They're the judge and jury of whether your content is relevant or not. I know daily where my readers are coming from, what post titles and content generates the most traffic and what search terms they are using.

**5 Use your writing to learn.** When I first started blogging, I was reminded of the old saying, "*you don't know what you know until you write it down.*" It's true. Writing strategizes and invigorates my learning. It can get me ahead of the learning curve and provide me with a system to stay there.

**6 Keep focused.** If your blog is broad, you will not generate any significant traffic. Narrow your focus. Think narrow and deep rather than wide and shallow. Know who you are writing to, what you are writing about, know the categories you will be writing to, the key words that you want to dominate for search.



# ROXANNE DARLING

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **Roxanne Darling** loves to travel, speak in public, paddle the 6-person outrigger canoe, and is trying to give up working really long hours. She walks the line between technology and communication with a ballerina's balance and has a way of inspiring even luddites to try new things online. Please let it be known though, perhaps as a graduate of UC Berkeley, she is not a bystander or interested in the status quo! She was voted #24 of the 50 Most Powerful & Influential Women in Social Media.

Blog: <http://www.barefeetstudios.com>

Twitter: @roxannedarling

Recent data show that Fortune 500 companies are joining Twitter (35%) at a faster rate than are adopting blogging (22%). (Source: The Center for Marketing Research at UMass Dartmouth;

<http://www1.umassd.edu/cmr/studiesresearch/2010f500.cfm>)

I would suggest that companies beef up on the blogging as there are numerous benefits derived from blogs that outweigh the use of Twitter in my opinion.

- Data from [Hubspot.com](http://www.hubspot.com) show a direct correlation between blogging and B2B customer acquisition. The more you blog, the greater the likelihood of acquiring customers via online marketing, such that blogging 2-3 times a week generates an average 69% increase in new customers. (Source: [http://www.hubspot.com/Portals/53/docs/resellers/reports/state\\_of\\_inbound\\_marketing.pdf](http://www.hubspot.com/Portals/53/docs/resellers/reports/state_of_inbound_marketing.pdf))
- The more you blog, and include your top keywords and case studies, the higher you perform on search results, making it

“ Direct correlation between blogging and B2B customer acquisition.”

far easier for customers to find you, get to know your company, its products and services, and pre-sell themselves on the spot, 24/7.

- The challenge to this is in finding blog contributors who understand conversational marketing and customer service. I find having an editor with an editorial calendar is a great tool for keeping the voices engaged and consistently delivering robust content.
- Your blog is your home base - where you can post breaking news, interact with your customers, collect feedback, and share details of social marketing campaigns, etc.
- The best blogs increasingly feature **interactivity** (join the email list, add comments) and **rich media** (streaming Twitter messages, YouTube videos, live video streams of featured events, photo groups from your vendors, customers, and staff) and much more.

“ Your blog is your home base.”





**ROXANNE  
DARLING**

- All of this media-making and interactivity enhances conversations with customers and builds your blog site as the most trusted destination for information and testimonials about your products and services.

Although blogging has become mainstream in selected tech-centric communities, there remains a considerable growth opportunity in most vertical markets. With only one in four Fortune 500 companies currently blogging, you can still be the first in your sector to use blogging to grow your business and strengthen your customer relationships.





## SAMIR BALWANI

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **Samir Balwani** is a digital marketing strategist, helping businesses create holistic marketing solutions. His areas of expertise include digital communications, online marketing, and new media pr.



**Blog:** <http://samirbalwani.com/>



**Twitter:** @samirbalwani

### KEY TRENDS FOR 2011:

See 2011 being the year businesses really embrace blogs and realize that regardless of the industry, blogging gives you an advantage that you shouldn't forego. Aside from possibly publishing a book, nothing proves expertise better than a strong blog. Blogs give others the ability to peer into the business mentality, culture, and mission.

### STARTING A BLOG IN 2011:

Without a doubt, 2011 is the year to start a blog. Online, early adopters are given an advantage over those that delay.

The longer a blog is around, the more posts it accrues. The more published content a blog has, the more traffic it generates and more authority it commands. If your business doesn't have a blog and isn't publishing content, every day is a missed opportunity.

### CHALLENGES IN 2011:

One of the biggest challenges to businesses online is that users are becoming savvier. Before, businesses could put

together a blog and skimp on design and content. For proof, simply compare sites from before to what sites are now.

All in all, it's more difficult to be successful online now than it was before. That being said, with hard work and dedication, businesses can still make their blogs work for them; it simply takes more sophistication and forethought compared to before.

“

If your business doesn't have a blog and isn't publishing content, every day is a missed opportunity.”



## J-P DE CLERCK

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **J-P De Clerck** is an experienced international blogger and marketing consultant. He is specialized in content marketing, cross-channel marketing (email, social, search,...), conversion optimization, online media and the multi-channel use of content from an integrated, customer-centric and data-driven perspective. You can *connect with him via Twitter*. J-P is also manager of the *Social Marketing Forum*.

 **Blog:** <http://www.socialmarketingforum.net/author/conversionation/>

 **Twitter:** @conversionation

## CORPORATE BLOGGING IN 2011: INEVITABLE CHANGES

**S**ome people think that blogging is a thing of the past. And that corporate blogs are ubiquitous. Wrong. Even though we have been discussing the importance of blogs for many years and all the changes in the area of social media and mobile have placed the subject in a forgotten corner, corporate blogs are anything but widely distributed, as proven by various studies conducted in 2010. So, what are my predictions for 2011?

“ Dialogue is more personal and can lead to relationships and ultimately business. ”

## MORE COMPANIES WILL BLOG: 5 REASONS

I believe that companies will blog much more in 2011. There are various reasons for this.

**1.** Parallel with the increased use of social media, even in B2B, there is a need for other forms of dialogues between companies and (potential) clients. Or should I say: between people working for the blogging company and other people. Blogs offer many

options. Blogs are communication channels, even if very few people sometimes actually respond to the posts. There are much larger communities of readers, visitors and ‘fans’ surrounding good blogs than the ones that are visible. And even reading about your company’s story, about what you know and about the people behind the company walls is a form of dialogue. This is taken up a notch by, for example, giving comments, registering for the blog newsletter, subscribing to the RSS feeds, following the Twitter account and much more. From that moment on, the dialogue is more personal and can lead to relationships and ultimately business.

**2.** Blogs are ‘hubs’ in the complex ‘hub and spoke’ model of social media. The term ‘hub and spoke’ is used amongst others in aviation and is a star-shaped model

whereby a central hub controls various star points and the star points lead back to the ‘hub’. In social media the model is more complex because there may be various hubs and the various star points (social presences used by a company for exam-

“ Blogging often is the first step towards using social media. ”



**J-P DE  
CLERCK**

ple) form a part of connected networks. Blogs play a centrifugal role in the distribution of content and the establishment of social interactions which, in turn, lead to interaction-triggered, user-generated or conversation-induced content and stories. Blogs are the websites of the social and viral Web. Companies are starting to realize this.

**3.** A brand and company is strongly influenced by people, experiences and stories. This has always been the case, it is simply more obvious now. Companies are advised to “let go” of their brand more. And rightly so. Very few experts, however, also actually recommend how to do this in practice. A company blog is a very important step for many companies. And for a lot of them it is also a very difficult step. But it’s impossible to stop the evolution towards more empowered customers and that is exactly why more companies will blog. In my experience (and that of many others) blogging often is the first step towards using social media.

**4.** People are much more actively searching for information in preparation to their purchases. ‘Content’, search engines, social recommendations and comments play an

important role. With the rise of social functions in search engines and the increased importance of content in the “findability” of a company, blogs are invaluable for content marketing, search engine marketing and ‘inbound marketing,’ just about all forms used by people to find what they are searching for and thus get to know your content, stories, blog posts and company.

**5.** People are genuinely tired of the stiff corporate language and the dull tone of classic corporate communication. Why? Because it is not actually communication. The word communication comes from the same linguistic stem as “community” and “(in) common.” Communication takes place

**“**  
Blogs should and will be much more integrated in a multi-channel approach.  
**”**

between at least two people. And many companies had forgotten that. By personalizing the language, the interaction and the topics, companies are able to win back lost faith. Authenticity and transparency are very important. But this is only the basis. Much more important is that the ‘content’ of the communication is customized to

the various ‘target groups’ that you want to talk with and that the people producing this content and responding to content of others, come out and are treated as real human beings of flesh and blood, not “labels.” Blogs allow a more personal communication approach.

#### **FOUR CHANGES THAT WILL OCCUR WITH BLOGGING COMPANIES**

For companies that blog actively, there are also many challenges and changes ahead for 2011.

**1.** Blogs should and will be much more integrated in a multi-channel approach. Interactions have to be realized between various channels depending on the communication and information preferences of the reader/visitor. The days in which blogs were independent from other channels are finally over. The content placed on the blog and produced by the community will be included more in other communication channels and, in return, people will have more possibilities for a customized “blog experience” and this via the channels of their choice.

**2.** Companies will start increasingly more blogs, besides the blogs they already





**J-P DE  
CLERCK**

have, and let go of their own brand. They will focus more on the themes that interest their various target groups and are related to their activities. The “one size fits all” corporate blog is no longer good enough. Blogs should first of all aim at nurturing interest-based communities to enter them into the influence sphere of the blogging company, without its brand(s) being too prominent. It’s not shouting but of course businesses can show what they offer and stand for. Doing this, blogs will also become “spokes” and networks will become at the same time more complex and more relevant, with all hubs reinforcing each other, the brand and the offered value.

**3.** Guest blogs will become more important, and the “opening up” of corporate blogs for other blogs and bloggers in general is essential. Content curation and aggregation models will also become more important. Companies have to optimize the value of their blogs and offer the content in various ways. Just as private bloggers, they need to tap more into the network effects of a connected blogosphere. Many companies don’t allow guest bloggers, don’t provide links to other blogs or include neutral observations from third-party bloggers, that are of value

for their readers and customers. I would even go as far as to recommend companies, in the ambit of ‘co-opetition’ (the title of a great book), to start thematic blogs containing content of “colleagues.” Companies have to be more open for other parties and cooperate closely in their blogs.

**4.** Companies should think of their blogs as publications. Which also refers to setting up editorial calendars, transparent planning and thematic or other series. A blog is not something on which you occasionally post something. The community around your blog has expectations, as is the case with any other medium. Focus on the expectations; provide subjects and series that people look forward to.

**“** Content curation and aggregation models will also become more important. **”** Follow the multi-media path more and turn your blogs into full fledged interactive media. By setting up editorial calendars in function of what is going on in the market and events taking place during specific periods in the life cycle of your target group, the value of your blog increases even more. Planning, organi-

zating and keeping the stories alive become much more important.

**5.** Companies should and will let go of their company- and even thoughtleader-centric and narcissistic blogging models. Don’t (only) think of blogs as PR-instruments. Nor should you think of them as a means to indicate just how good and smart you are. You should even think of them less as SEO optimization tools. Think more of them as channels for dialogues and concentrate on what the people that are visiting them want. The rest will simply follow. The only thing you should do is to be ready when someone wants to do more than simply visit your blog: so prepare the necessary “lead generation” instruments for when the reader is ready for more.



# CECE SALOMON-LEE

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **Cece Salomon-Lee** is principal of PR Meets Marketing, which explores the intersection of PR, marketing, and social media.



Blog: [www.prmeetsmarketing.com](http://www.prmeetsmarketing.com)



Twitter: [@csalomonlee](https://twitter.com/csalomonlee)

## DRIVE THE CONVERSATION WITH B2B BLOGGING

**W**hile more and more corporations have started a blog this past year, we have not fully realized the full potential of B2B Blogging to drive marketing and PR objectives forward. I envision 2011 to be the year when marketers move from “broadcasting” company-related news into a publishing platform to provide insight and commentary on industry news.

This ability to provide real-time analysis of industry trends and competitor announce-

ments empowers B2B marketers to drive the conversation in a 24/7 news cycle, especially when competitors remain silent.

The challenges? How to curate the corporate blog content and leverage it across the B2B marketing channels. And how to balance the business objectives of the blog with the transparency, honesty and conversation that organically grows around any successful blog.

“ a publishing platform to provide insight and commentary on industry news. ”



# AMBAL BALAKRISHNAN

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **Ambal Balakrishnan** is the Co-founder of ClickDocuments. She is a technologist-turned-marketer. Ambal spent about a decade in the Corporate world in various roles – engineering, program management, business development, strategy and marketing for premium and fast growing product divisions at fortune 500 companies. Ambal received her MBA from Wharton, Univ. of Penn and Masters in Computer Science from Purdue University.

 **Blog:** <http://clickdocuments.com>

 **Twitter:** <http://twitter.com/Ambal>

**W**elcome to the era of “content snacking”. Attention span is diminishing and as a result content consumption is changing.

Notice how we consume content as continuous feeds - blog posts, twitter updates, short podcasts, 2 minute videos etc?

Information overload is an understatement. Multitasking cannot be avoided. Attention is at an all-time premium. This can be a major problem for B2B bloggers and marketers OR it can be an opportunity for those who chose to look at it from a different perspective, the “content snacking” perspective.

What if we B2B bloggers and marketers pre-package content with a brief summary? This will allow your target audience (blog reader, potential client or customer) to get a flavor of the content before digging deeper to finding out more.

“Attention span is diminishing and as a result content consumption is changing.”

Example: Story Highlights (3-4 bullet points) for CNN.com articles.

### ACTION FOR 2010:

Respect your target audience’s time. Minimize your

content. Provide an appetizer (catchy title, meaty summary) before inviting your reader to the full-course meal.

“Respect your target audience’s time.”



## JEFF KORHAN

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **Jeff Korhan** is a new media and small business marketing speaker and trainer, a frequent guest blogger, and a social media columnist. He applies over three decades of marketing experience to helping entrepreneurs and small business owners capitalize on emerging Web marketing trends.



Blog: <http://jeffkorhan.com>



Twitter: [@jeffkorhan](https://twitter.com/jeffkorhan)

### KEY TRENDS IN B2B BLOGGING FOR 2011

**M**arketers will seek more personalized interaction with consumers in 2011. Creative methods of social marketing that encourage engagement will become the norm – along with a noticeable decrease in traditional brand marketing. This will be reflected in the content and voice of business blogs.

The influence of social search will have a profound effect on all aspects of social marketing. As more companies begin to understand how social interaction and sharing works to create contextual maps that personalize their brands, they will intensify their blogging efforts to create and curate that content.

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The influence of social search will have a profound effect on all aspects of social marketing.”





## ARDATH ALBEE

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **Ardath Albee**, CEO of her firm Marketing Interactions, Inc., helps B2B companies with complex sales create eMarketing strategies and contagious content that turns prospects into buyers. She writes the Marketing Interactions blog and her book, *eMarketing Strategies for the Complex Sale*, was released last fall by McGraw-Hill. Ardath's clients include, Cisco, FPX, Avid Technology, Tyco Electronics and BMC Software.



Blog: <http://marketinginteractions.typepad.com/>



Twitter: @ardath421

**T**he biggest trend I see for B2B blogging next year is increased adoption. As more B2B marketers confront the constant need to fuel the demands for content, blogging can give them the edge. A blog post can be very compelling with only about 350 words on a tightly focused topic. Your posts can be shared on social networks to pull inbound traffic, help to boost search engine results and promote interactive dialogue. Blog posts can also be used in nurturing programs, eNewsletters and to earn media mentions. With prospects short on time, a quick 2-minute read can often produce the engagement you need to spike their interest to learn more from you and your company. The challenge, of course, is the discipline of writing. Writing short and doing it well is a skill that B2B marketers need to acquire and polish.

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A blog post can be very compelling with only about 350 words on a tightly focused topic.”

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If you haven't started a corporate blog, get moving now.”

### IF YOU'VE NOT STARTED A BLOG YET, IS 2011 THE YEAR TO DO SO? WHY OR WHY NOT?

If you haven't started a corporate blog, get moving now. As David Meerman Scott coaches us, marketing is a real-time endeavor. With a blog, you can respond quickly to a market trend or business development. We all know that prospects prefer to self-serve their content. If updating your corporate website is a timely undertaking, you need to have a way to publish content quickly and a blog provides the platform for doing so.

Prospects also want value in addition to products. To give your company a competitive advantage, get your expertise onto a blog and let it shine. The other advantage to a blog is that no heavy production is required. Type, save and publish. Yes, it's that fast. Blogs, done well, can provide your company with a competitive advantage. The only reason I can think of not to have a blog is if you can't dedicate the resources to keep it current. There's nothing worse than a stagnant blog. This said, if you weigh the pros and cons, I think you'll find a



**ARDATH  
ALBEE**

compelling case for making a blog an integral part of your B2B marketing mix.

### **WHAT NEW CHALLENGES MIGHT EXIST IN 2011 AROUND B2B BLOGGING?**

The challenge for blogging in 2011 will be fresh ideas. With the avalanche of available information, there is a lot of “me too” information out there. B2B marketers need to continually source ideas differently than their prospects will find elsewhere. And that will raise the level of difficulty for many. Otherwise your blog will be seen as contributing to the noise, rather than a desirable destination for fresh and credible expertise. Be dry, stuffy and repetitive at the risk of losing your audience. Instead, challenge yourself to come up with new takes on the issues that interest your prospects and customers. The ultimate challenge with blogging is making it more than an item on your marketing “to do” list.





## ERIC GOLDMAN

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **Eric Goldman** is the CEO of Gossamar, one of Canada's leading Inbound Marketing Automation consultants. We bring 60 years of business to business experience to bear on providing Marketing, Software Development and Sales and Marketing Automation Process design for SMBs.



**Blog:** <http://www.inbound-marketing-automation.ca/blog>



**Twitter:** @gossamar

### KEY TRENDS FOR 2011:

**1** More and more blogs will appear (about 1.5 million blog posts are published a week already). I believe the social media monitoring tools like Radian6 and Sysomos will thus need to become even smarter at sifting through this sea of posts to find ones that are relevant to your own "conversation".

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Syndicated content will continue as a rapid growth area.”

**2** Posts individually have to get better. Aiming for visibility above all those posts means your own posts have to be factual, provide real information (value), and above all, be entertaining.

**3** Syndicated content will continue as a rapid growth area. As more and more people learn something about SEO and the importance of external links to your own site, I believe more people will embrace the concept of sharing their posts to gain the additional links.

### START BLOGGING IN 2011:

Start Now!

**A** A Blog allows you to communicate to the Internet at large newsworthy items concerning your company.

**B** A blog is also a great way to boost your rankings on Search Engine Results Pages, or SERPs. When you write a post, you can use your keywords in it and each occurrence of these words helps to boost your site's authority in the search engine's eyes.

**C** Inbound Marketing Automation relies on using the content on your site to engage visitors once they arrive. Blogs are an important part of this content, as blogs allow you to demonstrate your thought-leadership clearly. If you successfully demonstrate leadership in this way, your blog's readership will grow and with it your reputation as a leader, which in turn will attract yet more readers, and so it goes...

“  
Blogs allow you to demonstrate your thought-leadership”



## JAY BAER

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **Jay Baer** is a tequila-loving, hype-free social media strategist. He's the founder of Convince & Convert, a leading social media strategy firm, and author of the popular Convince & Convert blog. His first book, *The NOW Revolution* (co-authored with Amber Naslund) will be released February 1.

 **Blog:** <http://www.convinceandconvert.com/>

 **Twitter:** @jaybaer

**2011** will be the year that the B2B companies widely recognize the importance of having a viable blog. Social media and online content creation is actually more important for B2B companies than it is for B2C companies. That's because B2B usually has fewer customers (magnifying the peer influence of each); B2B is often a highly considered, researched purchase; and B2B

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Social media and online content creation is actually more important for B2B companies than it is for B2C companies.  
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often relies more on search - which blogging impacts significantly.

B2B companies will recognize that blogging is a relatively easy an inexpensive way to accomplish three important communication task: humanize the company to drive kinship and purchase preference; answer questions among prospective customers (increasing conversion rate); and widening the customer funnel through better search optimization.

The challenge, however,

will be that many new B2B blogs will not have content quality, publication frequency, personal touch, SEO aptitude, or any other component of success. If there is an explosion of B2B blogs - and I believe there will be - there will also be an explosion of bad B2B blogs. This is because a blog is much more of a living organism than is a website. It has to be watered and pruned and cared for consistently. And many B2B companies won't put in that level of effort - yet.

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An explosion of bad B2B blogs.”  
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# ERIK QUALMAN

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **Erik Qualman** is the author of *Socialnomics: How social media transforms the way we live and do business.*

He is an MBA Professor at the Hult International Business School. For the past 16 years Qualman has helped grow the digital capabilities of many companies including Cadillac, EarthLink, EF Education, Yahoo, Travelzoo and AT&T.



Blog: <http://socialnomics.net/>



Twitter: @equalman

**S**ocial media and blogging use by B2B isn't as prevalent as B2C today, but it will catch-up. It's similar to how Google played out for B2B. Many thought there would be special search verticals for B2B and that Google was a pure B2C play, but what we saw instead was delay of 1-2 years before B2B realized they could use Google in a similar fashion as B2C companies.

## TWO QUICK EXAMPLES OF COMPANIES UTILIZING BLOGGING AND SOCIAL MEDIA TO CAPTURE SALES:

SafeNet is the third largest information security company in the world, which brings to market integrated solutions required to solve customers' increasing security challenges. The organization serves more than 25,000 corporate and government customers in 100 countries. SafeNet garnered \$1,000,000 in revenue by setting up a group on LinkedIn called "Information Security Community." Managed by

SafeNet employee Holger Schultze, this group on LinkedIn connected over 67,000 people interested in discussing cloud computing, data protection, encryption, hacking with other people in the industry. SafeNet cultivated relationships and eventual business from this group.

Vocus is an On-Demand Software for Public Relations addressing the critical functions of PR including media relations, news distribution and news monitoring. Vocus achieved \$500,000 in new sales by blogging and posting about changes in the Public Relations industry. What they found to work better than their own blog posts, was highlighting relevant post by others around the public relations industry.

The first step is to listen. All B2B companies should start monitoring what is being said about their company, brand, executives, etc. If there isn't much being said about the company then one needs to listen to your customer's customer. For example, if you sell coffee sleeves or coffee stirrers to Dunkin' Donuts, then start monitoring for any customers complaining about these at Dunkin' Donuts.

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The first step is to listen.”

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What they found to work better than their own blog posts, was highlighting relevant post by others”



## HARRY HOOVER

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **Harry Hoover** is co-owner of My Creative Team, a North Carolina marketing agency that develops and designs websites and online applications, produces corporate videos, and does print and packaging design for Fortune 500 firms such as Lowe's, Newell Rubbermaid, Nucor, and National Gypsum. He has been B2B blogging since 2005, at THINKing, <http://my-creativeteam.com/blog>.



Blog: <http://my-creativeteam.com/blog>



Twitter: @MyCreativeTeam

In 2011, we'll see an increase in the number of B2B blogs, particularly among Inc. 500 and Fortune 500 companies. A pair of studies by the Center for Marketing Research at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth has taken a look at these groups and their blogging habits. Since 2007, there has been steady growth in the percentage of these companies blogging.

At the end of 2009, 45% of Inc. 500 companies were blogging. In 2010, 23% of Fortune 500 corporations report having blogs. Rapidly growing firms, like the Inc. 500, look for ways to stay ahead of the competition, so they tend to adopt new technology and tactics quicker. That will continue.

Fortune 500 companies don't like to be pioneers, trying things that may not work for them. B2B blogging has proven to be a worthy tactic, so we'll see continued acceptance, but probably not explosive growth, among larger firms this year.

Much of the B2B blogging at the Fortune 500 firms, I believe, will be focused on narrow

“B2B blogging has proven to be a worthy tactic, so we'll see continued acceptance, ”

audiences. Large companies may find that B2B blogging is not a strategic fit for a corporate wide blog, but does work for certain lines of business, or for specific audiences. For example, Bank of America has a thriving blog aimed at its own retail level employees, but has no active, public facing blog.

“focused on narrow audiences.”



# MADDIE GRANT

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **Maddie Grant** is co-author of *Open Community* and her consulting firm, SocialFish, helps associations and nonprofits build community on the social web. She can be found blogging daily at SocialFishing: <http://www.socialfish.org/blog>.

 **Blog:** <http://www.socialfish.org/>

 **Twitter:** @maddiegrant

**T**he social ecosystem around an organization, company or brand is made up of a homebase - your own website or very active official public space - and outposts, which are a mix of official and unofficial public sites like Facebook or LinkedIn groups and Twitter communities. We see a key trend for 2011 in organizations understanding the complexity and importance of the relationships between all of these online spaces.

Given that, if your homebase is the heart of your ecosystem, it needs to be the place where people know they can find you and where you can be completely clear about why your organization or business exists and how your community can help you achieve whatever goals you have. A good homebase has some crucial elements: frequent updates, two-way interaction, openness (about who is speaking and about the kind of information you're sharing), searchability (public content), and shareability - content that is interesting enough to pass along and the mechanisms, like sharing buttons, to make it easy for people to do just that. There are lots

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If you don't have a blog yet, start one today.  
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of different kinds of homebases, but it should be pretty clear that a well-designed and managed blog ticks all of these boxes. If you have one, concentrate on making it awesome and on connecting it (by commenting on others' blogs and linking to existing conversations) to the wider blogosphere around your industry. Use it to feed your other outpost spaces, but consider the social etiquette for each space (meaning don't shotgun blast everything everywhere). If you don't have a blog yet, start one today. If you have any content worth talking about, you have fodder for a blog. Think you suck at writing? Or only write in marketing-speak? Then find others to write for you on a regular basis. Don't worry about blog template features or the look of it or how often you should post or ideal post length - all of that stuff will happen as you practice and find your voice. Having a good blog is the number one best thing you can do to grow your business (or helping your clients grow theirs) in 2011.

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Having a good blog is the number one best thing you can do to grow your business  
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# KRISTIN ZHIVAGO

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **Kristin Zhivago** is president of Zhivago Management Partners, Inc. She is a "revenue coach" who helps CEOs and entrepreneurs increase their revenue by understanding what their customers want to buy from them and how they want to buy it. Her new book, "Roadmap to Revenue: How to sell the way your customers want to buy," will be released early in 2011.



Blog: <http://www.RevenueJournal.com>



Twitter: @kristinzhivago

think one of the key trends is one that is already in process: If you don't have a corporate blog already, you are way behind the curve. Potential customers coming to a website in search of a B2B product expect to find a blog. It serves a specific purpose beyond any of the other pages on the website.

We are starting to see firm standards for a successful corporate blog. First, not only the CEO contributes (and in many companies, the CEO does not contribute). Second, the articles are getting shorter and more to the point. Third, too many companies have been generating content that is typical of "insider thinking" such as the musings of one of the company's programmers on the subject of good programming practices and/or an analysis of the tools that programmers use. This content is easy for the programmer to write, but does little to answer the questions buyers ask as they are in the process of making their buying decision.

What purpose does a "good" blog serve in the customer's buying process? It allows the potential customer to get to know the people inside the

company, and find out how much they actually care about customers. The potential customer will scan the headlines and think, "Is this information helpful to me? Or are they simply talking to themselves?" In other words, "Who are these folks, and what do they care about? Do they care about me?"

The challenge going forward is to answer that customer question in the affirmative. In order for your blog to carry its weight as a marketing tool, your corporate blog must stand out among all the others in your industry. It has to be the one that customers not only visit, but bookmark and/or add it to their preferred content alert/reader systems.

The only way for that to happen is to ask customers what they'd like to know more about. Your current customers will tell you which questions they were hoping to find the answers to when they came to your blog. Potential customers will have those same questions. Your content should be aimed at answering those questions.

In addition, your blog should help your

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your corporate blog must stand out among all the others in your industry.”

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If you don't have a corporate blog already, you are way behind the curve.”





**KRISTIN  
ZHIVAGO**

current customers use your product more effectively. There are dozens of ways to educate your buyers. Prospective customers coming to your blog will take note of that helpfulness, and will decide that they want to do business with your company.



# BLAKE LANDAU

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **Blake Landau** is a writer and social media strategist. She has experience working in social business software, the contact center space and conference production for senior executives. She loves cooking and writes a food blog called The Blakery.

 **Blog:** <http://www.blakelandau.com>

 **Twitter:** @blakelandau

**T**he best blogs are conversational in nature. They aren't heavy with corporate jargon. The content is clear and simplistic in addition to being easy to read. Some of the more popular blogs--like Seth Godins--share stories that draw from real life.

Some of the best bloggers use story-telling as a tactic to draw conclusions about the business world. For example Rosabeth Moss Kanter of Harvard Business Review writes a compelling *blog* and a lot of her commentary draws parallels between two possibly unrelated topics. Her blog is of interest to people who are not solely coming from the business world. Her content is very relevant to real life.

Corporate blogs--those hosted on the company website--never get as much traffic as those that are run by individuals off the corporate website.

We are seeing more mashed-up content. For example written content might be coupled with a vlog, podcast and Tweet stream. One trend I would like to see disappear are blogs that have an audio component--a digital

“the best bloggers use story-telling as a tactic to draw conclusions about the business world.”

recording that narrates the blog.

I have a blog where I focus on social business--but under that umbrella there are quite a few related real-life topics. I try not to repeat the same stuff that everyone else is saying. The me-too game gets old fast.

In 2011 we will see more companies create brands with the face of one of their employees. My personal brand is just as important to me as what I am working on professionally. The lines are blurring between what I say with my work hat, and what I say in my personal socialsphere.

With regard to old school marketing, push messaging will become increasingly scarce. Consumers are sick of it. Marketers--as they compete for eyeballs--will have to work harder to make themselves interesting. Marketers will have to verse themselves in community management which will become key critical to the marketing community.

“In 2011 we will see more companies create brands with the face of one of their employees.”



# SCOTT GILLUM

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### ■ R. Scott Gillum

Scott currently heads the Channel Marketing practice, and the DC office for GyroHSR, a B2B agency. Previously, he was a management consultant for 12 years. Scott has been named to several "best of" lists as a B2B blogger. He also has authored a chapter on Channel Marketing that will appear upcoming book entitled *Advice From the Top – The Expert Guide to B2B Marketing*, to be published by the Business Marketing Association. His work on integrated sales and marketing funnels was the subject of a Harvard Business School case study.



Blog: <http://www.b2bknowledgesharing.com>



Twitter: @scottgillum

## WILL THE COMMERCIALIZATION OF BLOGGING KILL IT?

Blogs play a vital role when customers are searching for product information: 70% of individuals turn to user or customer reviews or ratings before purchasing a product. In addition, 90% of online trust recommendations from people they know while 70% trust reviews and recommendation from people they do not know<sup>1</sup>. To understand the context of these figures, a mere 14% of individuals trust direct advertising.

Companies and agencies have taken note of this fact. Bloggers are constantly fielding calls from agencies and companies asking them to blog about or mention a product or company in their posts.



Blogs play a vital role when customers are searching for product information:

One of the most popular blogs is totally dedicated to teaching others how to profit from blogging. Other digital "cottage industries" like Business to Bloggers, are recruiting "for profit" bloggers to hawk everything from baby clothing to gift wrap.

The question for 2011 is will blogs lose credit-

ability with readers because of commercialization of the medium? It is estimated that 900,000 new blogs are created each day, so we have to ask, which ones are only in it for the money? Expect new rating sites to come online and for Google to roll out tools that allow readers to rate blog sites. One thing is certain: how blogs are written, used, searched for, and rated will certainly change in 2011.

<sup>1</sup> Research from GyroHSR's Channel Insights white paper entitled; *The Impact of the Great Recession and Social Media on Sales & Marketing Integration*, December 2010.



One thing is certain, how blogs are written, used, searched for, and rated will certainly change in 2011.



## CHRIS ABRAHAM

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **Chris Abraham**, President and COO of Abraham Harrison LLC, is an Internet analyst and Web strategy specialist with expertise in Web 2.0 technologies, including content syndication, online collaboration, blogging, and consumer generated media. Chris has had an influential web presence since 1993 and started blogging in 1999, focusing on community, connection, innovation, and brand extension. Chris received his BA in American Literature from The George Washington University, studied American Literature at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England, and studied French at the University of Hawaii.



Blog: [www.marketingconversation.com](http://www.marketingconversation.com)



Twitter: @chrisabraham

### KEY TRENDS IN 2011:

I believe that there will be a return to basics in 2011. In the past, people thought of blogs as a vehicle for SEO, as a platform for shameless self-promotion, as just a place for very long-winded “letters from the CEO,” and especially places where companies mainly just announce things.

In 2011, we’ll see B2B blogs return to where they started and what they should be. Blogs started out to be much more process-oriented literally a “web log” -- blog. This is akin to a captain’s log or an adventurer’s log or even something much more like the letter writing or journal writing of the past. In the past, journals and diaries were written very carefully because they would eventually be re-hashed into either a memoir or willed to sons and daughters upon death. Really part of a legacy, as the blog should always have been.

And I believe that companies will again -- 5 years later -- stop being sneaky or salesy or pitchy. They will go back to writing a process blog -- a “what we do and read and think on a daily basis.” Readers will begin to know who you are on a more personal, intimate, intellectual, and values-oriented way. In other words, the blog will say a lot about what matters most to that company or organization.

The English Cut blog <<http://www.english-cut.com>> was one of the first corporate blogs and is still one of the best. Why? Well, it give away the farm. The blog was not about how cool you would look in a bespoke, Savile Row suit. It was a daily or weekly spyglass into the world of high-end English tailoring, old-world style. It was -- and is -- a process blog. It goes into the people, the fabric, the techniques, traditions, the quality, the sizing and the wear around the sort of suit made in the traditional, old world style. The goal of the blog is, of course, to offer services -- to sell suits. However, when it comes to dropping more than \$1,000 on a garment, you are investing -- learning to trust -- in the values and priorities of the tailor and his shop as well as on end-quality of the suit of clothes itself. Words like “tradition” and “quality” and the sense of having something “made just for me” is as important as the perfect cut and the best quality fabric. Many big decisions are emotional, and blogs allow companies to build much more of a perceived personal bond in a way that can truly touch many more people. This is

“There is nothing worse than a ghost town.”



**CHRIS  
ABRAHAM**

a much more efficient way of sharing your values than by meeting folks by sponsoring conferences and events only.

I warn people not to commit to blogging if everyone you ask thinks that blogging is BS and that they'll only do it if you make them. It amazes me how many offices have someone who happily puts together an elaborate newsletter every week or month and also put together elaborate emails and so forth and yet considered blogging to be either too tough or too hard or too below him or her.

If you don't have someone who really loves it, is motivated to brainstorm and collaborate, and is ready to get the people who matter to contribute a little something for the blog on a weekly basis, then hire someone else -- or better yet, outsource to my agency!

There is nothing worse than a ghost town -- if you're not able to commit to at least a couple posts-a-week, every week, forever, than you had better just wait until 2012 when you have your priorities right and you're not wasting everyone's time.

If you start a blog all hot and heavy and then trail off and then it stops around month six (if I had a nickel for every time that happened to a blog...), then you're just going to disappoint your followers, your readers, and

so forth. They won't come back. They won't trust you any more.

If you're going to do this, you had better resource it right. Get the right people in. Commit to funding for at least 12-18 months and don't get gun shy at month 3 or 6 and then cancel the project.

Don't do it!

#### **START A BLOG IN 2011:**

Don't worry. Blogging died (and Facebook and Twitter took over) and then blogging was reborn. This is a perfect time. Blogs are awesome for SEO, Google still loves blogs more than anything else. People are still monitoring and reading blogs. And now, because of digg, Twitter, Facebook, the iPad, and all the rest, is it easy for people to share your amazing blog content with their friends, associates, partners, and venture capitalists.

This is a perfect time. There are more people online now than there have ever been and they're more savvy. They also feel entitled to assume that anyone worth anything can be reached anywhere: Twitter, Facebook, blogs, etc. This makes social media and online monitoring is essential in 2011. So is making sure that all of your new blog posts can be shared to Twitter, Facebook, digg, Buzz, red-

dit, etc. You should also make sure that you have your blog set up to auto post new Facebook Page wall posts and tweets the moment your new blog post goes live. Today, readers may want to get their blog updates via email, Facebook, or Twitter. Asking them to remember to visit your blog via some bookmark is not going to work anymore.

Companies who use a blog as an essential part of their business marketing and communications plan are now much better at it, and they have a lot less competition. The land rush is over and there are still a dearth of "best of" examples of blogs that are consistent, open, engaging, interesting, reliable, honest, friendly, and personable.

People are still too often treating blogs and blog posts like they're status reports to their boss or book reports to their teachers. They're too stiff and you can tell that they either don't want to do it or are scared that they'll either do it wrong or that they'll not be professional enough. People who are not passionate about writing have a hard time pumping out content. People who are risk averse, also, will always play it safe and will run their posts through their very

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This is a  
perfect  
time.”



**CHRIS  
ABRAHAM**

own “dull small talk at the company Christmas party with the boss” filter, too.

**DIFFERENCES IN 2011:**

The blog will need to be part of an integrated marketing and communications plan. It would be great if the blogger him or herself could also be the tweeter and the face behind the Facebook page.

The blog is a community and the comments need to be on because all the magic happens not in the prepared speech but in the questions and answers afterwards. The people who blog need to either have a staff to make sure that all questions and queries are addressed and that inappropriate (not simple challenging or negative) comments are moderated. Quickly and timely. The comments and @replies that pop up on blogs and social networks and in emails are not just community building but also essential and public opportunities to serve the customer and offer solutions. Make it timely. Heck in addition to marketing and communications, in 2011 that plan

“ part of an integrated marketing and communications plan. ”

might need to also add “customer support” to marcom -- as we see on a daily basis on Twitter and Facebook. People want their queries and questions solved and answered. I have seen some terrible instances of siloing and what universities call departmental separation... Marketing, public affairs, PR, communications, advertising, the C-suite, and customer service and support have an awesome opportunity to play together and collaborate some all with the express aim of meeting the needs of the customers and clients.

**NEW CHALLENGES IN 2011:**

At the end of the day, the challenges in 2011 are much the same as they have been: under-blogging, under-monitoring, not responding or engaging visitors quickly enough, as well as issued of moderating, misinformation, or other ways of using your words and your blogs and your messages against you. One new one is that maybe 2011 is the year of the social media crisis plan!



# YANN ROPARS

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

■ **Yann Ropars** runs Extanz.com: A PR 2.0, Inbound Marketing, Social Media Agency. He is passionate about humans, web startups & new media.

 **Blog:** <http://www.extanz.com>

 **Twitter:** @yannr

**B**logging is clearly one of the most powerful tactics for B2B when considering social media. It allows for 3 main benefits: google search visibility (long tail), thought leadership and inbound blogger outreach. Most businesses struggle to get started in blogging however, as they lack an understanding of what to blog about and why it is important to go through such hard work. People leading a brand's blogging efforts need to understand that it's not about themselves nor the brand they represent. It's about the constituency and their need to learn new things related to the brand. Starting a blog is also a very big commitment and if a company doesn't commit a team to this, it will fail and quickly become a waste of time and resources. In 2011, B2B blogging will be increasingly important as companies wake up to the fact social networks are low hanging fruit and bring lower rewards as referral mechanisms. Blogging, on the other hand, allows brands to cut through the social media clutter and this will become increasingly important as

2011 is often cited as the year of 'curation'. People and algorithmic curations like those embodied in the iPad application FlipBoard, web application Paper.li or places like TechMeme.com, are all trying to increase the signal to noise ratio and their use is on the rise. This trend will increase pressure on average quality content (you just won't be seen as relevant and worth curating). Blogging quickly and strongly differentiates brands and content creators, so brands need to increasingly see themselves as journalists of their own industry. They are here to inform and curate, becoming central to the market in which they playing. If they can do that, they will reap the benefits of all that is to come in 2011.

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“  
Blogging is clearly one of the most powerful tactics for B2B when considering social media.”

## SUMMARY

Tom and I would like to thank each of the contributors. We have received considerable value from their input. We hope that you have as well.

If you'd like to continue to receive value from these experts, we'd highly recommend that you subscribe to:

- [Aggregage Central](#) - collecting the very best content around aggregation, curation and marketing
- [Aggregage Blog](#) - Tony's continued writing about these topics
- [B2B Marketing Zone & Social Media Informer](#) - content communities around b2b marketing and social media

featuring many of the people who contributed to this white paper.

## ABOUT AGGREGAGE

Aggregage is the Next Generation of Business Media. Aggregage creates online communities by bringing together content from the best sources around particular topics. We identify a topic (e.g., social media, eLearning, careers, leadership, etc.), find high-quality blogs around that topic, and then display those posts on a targeted site dedicated to that given topic. As an example, our site on eLearning has now become the highest traffic site on that topic.

B2B marketing professionals leverage Aggregage's topic sites to reach their specific audience. Our topic-centered sites aggregate the most engaging content available online around your specific market segment. If you are such a marketing professional, visit [www.aggregage.com](http://www.aggregage.com) to view the topic sites we have already launched. If you see your industry, contact me to discuss how we can help you build your brand and deliver on your marketing objectives. Contact me even if you don't see your industry; it's very likely a site we have in the works to launch soon. Contact me at [tony.karrer@aggregage.com](mailto:tony.karrer@aggregage.com).



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Using the power of *Aggregate* to pull together some great resources around particular topics, we were able to compile a list of great resources on B2B Blogging. Enjoy!

### B2B BLOGGING BASICS

1. *How to Start a Business Blog or Corporate Blog*
2. *How to Launch a Successful Blog in 12 Weeks: Lessons from Webbiquity*
3. *Easy Steps to Amplify Your Blogging*
4. *Is a Blog Just a Container?*
5. *Three Elements of a Winning Blog Post*
6. *How to establish a voice of authority in a blog*
7. *5 Ways to Write a Killer B2B Blog Post*
8. *37 Reasons to Blog*
9. *10 Simple Strategies for Business Blog Content*
10. *6 Reasons Why Your Blog Is Your Most Important Social Media Tool*
11. *Save Time & Stress – Blog Editorial Calendar Template*
12. *New research shows impact of blogging on your corporate site's SEO*
13. *The Future look of Articles, Blogs and IM*
14. *5 Tips and Tricks to Make Your Blog ROCK!*
15. *The ultimate guide to blogging when you don't have time to blog*
16. *B2B Blogging Excellence*
17. *How to Write an Effective Business Blog*
18. *The Anatomy of a Blog Post*
19. *9 Reasons Why You Need to Have a Business Blog*
20. *Blog Checklist: 10 Items BEFORE You Publish...*
21. *Variety of Content is the Key in the Early Stages*
22. *78 Questions to Ask Before Launching a Blog*
23. *The Four P's of Effective Business Blogging*
24. *10 Posts That Re-Energize Your B2B Blog*
25. *Why Your Blog Beats Your Website to Your Prospects*
26. *Rick Short Explains How to Turn Staff Into Prolific Bloggers*
27. *Business Blogging – Do You Have What It Takes?*
28. *7 Essential Tools for Business Blogs*
29. *Optimizing Your WordPress Business Blog*
30. *Top 10 List on the Positives of Corporate Blogging*
31. *Checklist: How to Start a Business Blog*
32. *5 Tips for Business Blogging While Traveling*
33. *The Other 6 P's of Blogging*
34. *4 Business Blogging Best Practices*
35. *Business Blogs – Should they be part of your main domain or separate?*
36. *Should a Blog be Part of Your Corporate Website or Stand on Its Own?*
37. *How to Find Killer Topics for Blog Posts*
38. *Ten reasons to blog – even if nobody reads it*
39. *Proper Care and Feeding of a Blog*
40. *Stop boring me with your blogs*
41. *Blog as hub, site as spoke*

- 42. *Linking blogs and newsletters together*
- 43. *Checklist: How to Start a Business Blog*
- 44. *10 Corporate Blogging Tips and Strategies*
- 45. *Seven Ways to Revive a Neglected B2B Blog*
- 46. *B2B Blogging Excellence*
- 47. *Tips for Getting More Comments on Your Blog*
- 48. *33 Common Business Blog Mistakes*

## USING YOUR BLOG TO GENERATE LEADS AND MOVE THROUGH THE SALES CYCLE

- 1. *How to Convert Readers into Clients on Your Blog*
- 2. *Using Content to Move Prospects Forward in the Sales Cycle*
- 3. *How to Use a B2B Blog to Win Customers and Influence Prospects*
- 4. *B2B Lead Generation Using a Business Blog*
- 5. *A simple strategy to convert blog visitors into sales leads*
- 6. *Blog to Generate Leads*
- 7. *Blog Makeover Nets Sales Leads for Software Company*

- 8. *5 Ways B2B Blogs Can Fast-Track Marketing Efforts*

## MARKET YOUR BLOG

- 1. *9 Awesome Ways to Market a Business Blog*
- 2. *7 Tips for Getting People to Your B2B Blog*
- 3. *Six killer ways to boost blog traffic and revenue via social media*
- 4. *Drive Blog Traffic Without Using Twitter*
- 5. *Does Your Blog Have a Long Tail*
- 6. *35 Ways to Market Your Blog*

## B2B BLOGGING ROI AND METRICS

- 1. *3 Business Blogs with Proven ROI from Industrial Companies*
- 2. *Spoof: Classifying Business Bloggers Based on Industry*
- 3. *Meaningful Metrics for B2B Blogging*
- 4. *Bloggng Benchmaks: In Search of the Missing Metrics*

## CURATION / AGGREGATION

- 1. *Is Content Curation an Easy Way for Content Marketers to Do More.*
- 2. *Content Curation in B2B Marketing*
- 3. *Content Aggregation: The Future of (B2B and Consumer) Media?*