

Do you blog?

Definition

If you use the internet frequently, you would have come across blogs or web logs. For the uninitiated, blogs are "a frequent chronological publication of personal thoughts and web links".

A blog is a mixture of what is happening in a person's life and on the internet. You might be tempted to ask how the two are connected. Well, since we spend a lot of time on the internet, we all want to have our personal spaces just as in our real lives beyond the transactional interaction such as email, voice, chat and websites.

Blogs allow us just that - we can say what we want, when we want and how we want and share that information with others in the form of free flow discussion, user groups or simple chronologies of events. It is a powerful form of personal expression on the internet.

People maintained such records long before the internet but this emerged as a phenomena only with the advent of automated publishing systems that made it easy for not so tech savvy people to maintain such sites.

How blogging started

The first weblog was the first website, <http://info.cern.ch/>, the site built by Tim Berners-Lee at CERN. From this page TBL pointed to all the new sites as they came online.

Andrew Smales, a programmer in Toronto who launched the first do-it-yourself blog tool — Pitas.com — in July 1999. Smales blundered into blogging as he was developing software that would allow him to more easily update his personal Web site and facilitate the "online diary community" he envisioned. Personal sites aren't listed prominently on Internet search engines, and Smales thought it would be "cool if I could just click around to read what other people were saying," rather than surf blindly for their sites.

As Smales worked on the software, he posted updates on his site, prompting visitors to offer suggestions. It was a comment from a visitor that clued Smales into the nascent blogging community, and he set to work on a sister project to the diary software — a blogging tool that would become Pitas, the first formal blogging site. Diaryland, Smales's diary site, followed soon thereafter, and both have grown steadily since.

The most popular site and tool is the aptly named Blogger.com (now owned by Google), was launched in August 1999 by Evan Williams, Paul Bausch, and Meg Hourihan - Part of Blogger.com's appeal is that it lets people store blogs on their own servers, rather than on a

remote base. This allows them to have a personalized address (like www.yourname.com), whereas with other blogging tools your address starts at the remote server. For a comprehensive listing of blogs, you might try Eatonweb portal.

Why blog anyway?

There are several schools of thought here – people like to peek into others' lives; people need information; people like to share information; there is also the thrill of reading someone else's journal no matter how mundane the content !!

Blogging is an anti corporate concept especially from the perspective of freedom of content and individual creativity. "A good blog is updated often, in a kind of real-time improvisation, pointers to interesting events, pages, stories and happenings elsewhere on the Web. New stuff piles on top of the page; older stuff sinks to the bottom."

Profile of a blogger

Let us take a look at what motivates or creates an avid blogger. Bloggers represent an independent knowledge community who discuss topics of your specific focus / interest. Bloggers are very serious about their work since anyone can critique it. A blogger faces a unique challenge of being confronted with his own thoughts and opinions and by the community visiting his site.

The format and content of a blog have links, commentary, personal thoughts and essays. Bloggers represent a community of fairly well researched 'micro content' that saves others a lot of time of areas of little known public domain sites.

How to get started

Obviously there are no free lunches since someone has to maintain these sites for you for a long period of time. There are specialist service providers such as Blogger.com or Salon blogs (Radio Userland) etc. Most standard licenses provide 40 MB of space and it can be increased for additional fees.

For a yearly fee, you get a publishing tool that lets you create / maintain your blog site, organizes and archives posts, publish written text, graphics, photographs, documents and more as well as integrate other information feeds to make the site more comprehensive. To get started, you need a PC, modem and an internet connection and the service takes care of the rest! Care to blog or shall we say dare to blog? Get started and get yourself a cyberlife....

Ranganath Iyengar, Managing Partner
Strategic Interventions India Pvt Ltd
www.siiplconsulting.com