The advantages of blogging

Some of the most popular Internet related terms today are the words "blog" and "blogging" - but what is blogging, and how can blogging be of benefit to me and my life?

What is Blogging?

The simplest answer to, "What is blogging?" is that it is the act of writing in and maintaining a blog. The word blog is actually a contraction of two words, "web log", and is a term used to describe a particular type of website. These websites could be called virtual diaries, or online journals that are used for either personal or a corporate expression of ideas and thoughts.

Most people who are involved in blogging use their blogs for personal reasons – to talk about their day, or important events in their lives. Businesses or other institutions also write blogs. In these instances, the blogs are used more as a way to keep their customers or followers in the know about key issues and events in their companies. Large companies, such as Microsoft and Sony, may have several different blogs flowing from within and some are written by employees, others by owners or outside observers. These blogs can be a good source of information about what is going on in the day-to-day life of a company.

Nick Holmes of Internet Newsletter for Lawyers says that blogging is the most successful and relevant Web 2.0 network and that's not going to change anytime soon

Surprisingly, many are unaware of the strength that a blog can provide for a website in support of business. Flexibility is one of its main strengths and this is often overlooked.

Sources
1. http://latimerhinksguineapig.blogspot.com/2008/01/why-blog.tml
2. http://www.gerrymcgovern.com/nt/2004/nt_2004_08_23_blogging.htm
3. http://www.enterpriseblogs.info/corporate-blogging/disadvantages

Blogs are commonly referred to as being "just a diary" but blogs have now evolved into something much more - a platform to promote business, an opportunity to educate readers with the potential to reach a massive internet audience. It is also free, apart from giving your time to blog of course.

So let's look at the advantages of corporate blogging:

- Blogs boost online branding, they create an awareness of your product and service.
- Blogs have the potential to develop stronger relationships with the organisation's customers. They provide an approachable "human face" for the business.
- Blogs provide an excellent way of sharing information and knowledge. The reader and client are better informed.
- Blogs allow you to interact with your customer base. Blogs offer you the option of enabling a "comments" field where readers can give you feedback.
- Blogs build up the profile of the author. The firm and author will be showcased as having talent and expertise.
- Blogs create an environment where not only the author, but all the participants can share ideas and opinions on a diverse range of subjects and learn from each other.
- Blogs are search-engine-friendly and since blogs are updated regularly, search engines will "crawl" them more often and add your new posts to their index
- Blogs provide a great tool for media and Public Relations. The cost of blogging is very small compared to television or print campaigns.

Corporate Blogging Disadvantages

Blogging really grew from a popular teenager pastime to a corporate requirement. The list of the companies dabbling in enterprise blogs is growing. However, not everyone is in favour of enterprise blogging and some drawbacks are:

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- There have been dozens of cases of workers warned or fired because of something they wrote on a blog. In a survey by Proofpoint, over 57 percent of executives at 332 large companies said they were concerned about blogs as a source of trouble for their companies.

- It can be tricky to drag public comment out of a company without first routing through the sanitizing filter of a press office.

- Even if senior managers trust staff not to give away the company's commercial secrets - and many don't - there are still enough worries about libel and (for publicly listed companies) stock market disclosure rules to have the legal department worried.

- There are plenty of areas of business where people are judged on their knowledge, and the competitive edge - and thus the safety of everyone's jobs - is the thickness of a single good idea. Sharing it all on a weblog, with competitors or (worse) an office rival is not really wise.

- There is a risk that an ill-judged comment could be seized upon by the media or disgruntled investors.

- The best non-corporate blogs are spontaneous and genuine. Poorly written corporate blogs can look fake, or perhaps worse, they reveal incompetence on the part of the writer.

- Like practically everything else on the Web, blogs are easy to start and hard to maintain. Writing coherently is one of the most difficult and time-consuming tasks for a human being to undertake. So, far from blogs being a cheap strategy, they are a very expensive one, in that they eat up time. As a result, many blogs are not updated, thus damaging rather than enhancing the reputation of the organization.

Sources
1. http://latimerhinksguineapig.blogspot.com/2008/01/why-blog.tml
2. http://www.gerrymcgovern.com/nt/2004/nt_2004_08_23_blogging.htm
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- The people who have most time to write have least to say, and the people who have most to say don't have enough time to write it. Thus, the real expertise within the organization lays hidden, as you get drowned in trivia.
- Blogs make many organizations look like disorganizations, with multiple tones and opinions. Contrary to what some might think, the average customer prefers it if the organization they are about to purchase from is at least somewhat coherent.

The advantages and disadvantages of Internet blogging are numerous, but ultimately it is up to you to decide whether or not blogging is something you would enjoy or profit from. Blogs are a great way to communicate and experience the Web – if used correctly.

Sources
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